

LOVAT
DICKSON'S
MAGAZINE

Volume 1

1933

KRAUS REPRINT CORPORATION

New York

1967

Printed in U.S.A.

LOVAT DICKSON'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

Edited by P. Gilchrist Thompson

NOVEMBER 1933

	EDITORIAL	1
<i>G. Hermon Gill</i>	STORM	3
<i>Louis Golding</i>	THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS	21
<i>Raymond Otis</i>	MEXICANO	43
<i>L. A. G. Strong</i>	THE BURIAL RACE	56
<i>John Collier</i>	AFTER THE BALL	72
<i>Clifford Bax</i>	THE TROUSSEAU	96
<i>Fritiof Nilsson</i>	THE FISHING PARTY	103
<i>A. Calder-Marshall</i>	ON THE MARCH	119
<i>Jules Romain</i>	QUINETTE'S CRIME	123

The Editor will be glad to consider stories offered for publication and will endeavour to return unsuitable MSS. when they are accompanied by a stamped envelope. Neither the acceptance of and payment for a contribution, nor the sending of a proof, can be regarded as a guarantee of publication.

Editorial, Advertising and General Business Offices: 38 Bedford Street, Strand, London, W.C.2. Annual subscription, inland or abroad, fifteen shillings, post paid



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

To our readers

THE cautious and unimaginative abound in this world, and they never fail to make their voices heard when a new venture is proposed.

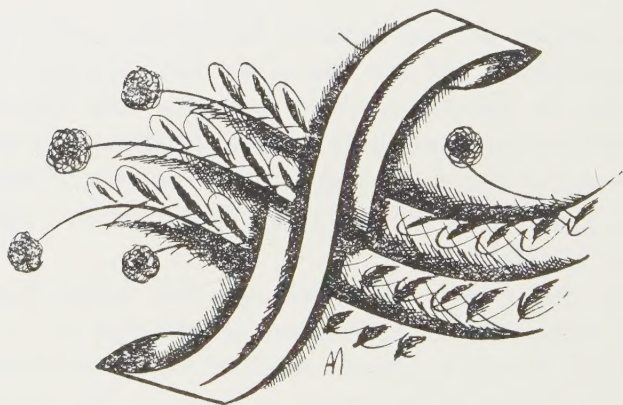
“A new magazine? But will you find a public for it? There are so many being published already, and people are so conservative in what they buy. It’s to be only short stories, is it? But could you get enough really good ones month after month?” And so on.

Our answer to our cautious friends is: yes, there are many magazines, but not one of the kind we have in mind meant for the short story as a distinctive and distinguished art form, free from political or other features, and attractive alike to those who want only an hour or two of interesting reading and to those who value the short story as a significant form of literature.

As to the supply of stories, we well know that many writers of established reputation cannot find an outlet for their work in this medium, while of writers struggling for recognition—and not getting it because the chances of having their work published is so small—there is no end, and among them may be many with whom lovers of good writing would be glad to be acquainted.

It is our hope that purchasers of this magazine will come to recognise that each month they will be sure of ample value for their twelve pence in the form of ten or a dozen stories of distinction and originality ; and that writers with something new to say, and the skill with which to say it, will welcome an outlet for their talents.

The short story, as an art form, has a history even longer than the novel and the greatest of writers in the past have not disdained its practice. There have of late been signs of awakened interest in this fascinating, and much neglected, branch of literature. But even to-day some of its foremost exponents are hardly known to the general reading public. It will be our endeavour, while including among our contributors writers of established reputation, to give a special welcome to those who have still to make a name.



Storm

CAPTAIN HENDERSON stared anxiously into the blackness ahead and on the starboard bow, a blackness in which at intervals appeared a ghostly blur of white as the "Roman Centurion" buried her bows into a sea surging to meet her, with a dull boom and a shock which shook her from stem to stern.

After each blow came a staccato rattle on the canvas dodger stretched tightly across the forepart of the bridge, and the water streamed down the windows of the wheelhouse and the cabs in each wing. Momentarily a sickly green glare hung in space as the hissing spray shot athwart the arc of the starboard side light, and then, shuddering, the "Roman Centurion" freed herself of the load which cascaded over the break of the forecastle head on to the foredeck, her bows swinging upwards in readiness for the next downward plunge, the water breaking round hatch coamings and ventilators and spouting through the washports, back into the rolling blackness from which it had been upflung.

The dodger was tightly stretched as a drumskin, hard as a board, impressed by the rushing wind. The manilla stops, contracted by their wetness, pulled the ridge rope downwards and the dodger upwards, and upon the taut canvas the spray

STORM

rattled a flam, the kettle drum taps in reply to the heavy booms from forward, the timpani in the great Wagnerian symphony played on the vibrating hull and rigging of the "Roman Centurion" by the mighty orchestra of wind and sea.

In the dark wheelhouse, the face of the helmsman hung in mid air, an indistinct paleness floating with little movement above the binnacle by whose dim light it was illuminated. High above, and slightly forward of the bridge, a thin white trembling line marked a signal halliard, caught for a fraction of its length from truck to rail in the rays of the foremast head light. Higher yet in the murk astern, the gleam of the lamp at the mainmast head showed fitfully as the smoke torn from the funnel raced across the line of vision from the bridge, appeared and disappeared, a winking, blinking, yellow star, following in its dizzy swayings the movements of the plunging hull above which it swung.

All else was blackness. Blackness of slight varying shades of intensity. Blackness filled with the high scream, the deep, hoarse roar, of the winter gale.

Captain Henderson stared into the eye of the wind and mechanically wiped the streaming spray from his face with a sodden handkerchief. He was a man of fifty-five, short and stocky, powerfully built, a man of the sea, never more evidently so than when he walked ashore in his double-breasted blue serge suit and bowler hat. One of the old school of wind-jammers, a sailor whom progress had forced into steam.

Command had come to him late in life. Forty years before, he had joined the Roman Line as apprentice when it was in the heyday of its existence. When its tall clippers with their long sweeping lines of painted ports had been the proud beauties of the Australian passenger and wool trade. When crews were picked and had the honour of their ship at heart.

STORM

When nothing was spared by owners or men, and nothing counted but the race.

But time and tide wait for no man. The owners of the Roman Line had hung on to sail for too long.

Of what avail are past records? What matter though the "Roman Legion," that beautiful full rigged ship, had run from London to Sydney, pilot to pilot, in sixty-three days? What matter though the "Roman Cohort" had logged three hundred and sixty miles in less than twenty four hours running the Easting Down? Other and longer sighted owners saw that steam had come to stay, and whilst the Roman Line was establishing sailing records round the Cape, they were establishing steamer connections through the Suez Canal, and now the once famous clippers were but memories, and the Roman Line boasted but four steamers in place of their once big fleet of sail, and even the four steamers were too small and too slow for the ever increasing demand for speed and comfort.

For the Australia via the Cape run is a dying trade. Passengers prefer the warmer and more interesting Canal route. Shippers demand the time saved by the decreased distance, and the Roaring Forties, on whose gales once streamed the tatters of rousing chanties torn from the decks of the clippers, over whose rolling roadway once scudded the white winged, swaying beauties of the sea, are now left empty, save where the grey ghost squalls stalk by, and the wheeling albatross soars and swoops athwart the wind.

So, for those who, like Captain Henderson, remained faithful to the service of the Roman Line, promotion had been slow. With only four ships, waiting for command was waiting for a dead man's shoes. For eighteen years Henderson had been chief officer. Now, at the age of fifty-five, he had held command for only twelve months. He had waited a

STORM

life time for his reward, and with it had come bitterness, bitterness and a growing, gnawing anxiety which ate at his vitals.

He thought of it all as he stood staring over the dodger. He thought of the big gulf which lay between the man in command of a ship and his officers, the difference in rank and power, in responsibility, in emoluments. And at last they were his, the power, the responsibility, the money.

The money which enabled him to marry the woman to whom he had been engaged for ten long years, years during which all his scant salary had been swallowed up in keeping his widowed mother and two sisters. The responsibility of the position, a position which now forced him to leave his wife, knowing that he would possibly never see her again, the one person whom he loved more than anything else on earth. The power to do nothing, save think, and think.

He thought of the words of the specialist, and pictured to himself the dark, red carpeted passage outside the consulting room, where the ultimatum had been delivered. The specialist had taken off his spectacles and polished them as he spoke. Henderson distinctly remembered the bright red cotton laundry mark on the hem of the handkerchief, and as he thought of it all, again, the futile, unreasoning, panicky rage swept over him.

"An operation, Captain," the specialist had told him, "is the only hope, and even that is a thousand to one chance. Your wife's heart is so weak that it is a grave risk to operate, but—" and he had laid his hand sympathetically on Henderson's shoulder.

Had followed the soothing voice of the other man again. The arrangements for a hospital. The specialist would perform the operation himself. The best would be done.

STORM

Everything possible would be done. But he must be prepared for the worst.

Then the interview with the Board of Directors of the Line. He pictured to himself the long panelled room, the shining table with its clean blotters and big pewter inkpots, the grave, concerned faces of the men to whom he appealed.

No! They were deeply sorry. They understood perfectly how he felt, but they could not grant his application for a voyage off. Had he been a junior officer, things would have been different, but at such short notice there was no one they could put in his place. There was no other captain of their employ in England. The chief officer was too young and inexperienced to take command. He would have to go.

And because he could not afford to throw up the job, for Jessie's sake he had to go. To leave her when she needed him most, when he needed her most, and might never see her again. With the money he had saved he could have just afforded to stand a voyage off, but not to throw his means of livelihood away altogether. Particularly with the expense of operation and hospital before him.

Responsibility. The responsibility he had always longed for. This is what it did for him. Had he been a junior officer, a young fellow like the third officer there, just out of his apprenticeship, a second mate's ticket and no experience, no responsibility, a steam boat sailor, never been in sail, and yet, with less than five years at sea getting twice as much money as Henderson had got after five times as long and fifty times the experience, he could have had his voyage off. Aye, and for no such reason as his.

A good enough youngster, Parker, but what training had he had to fit him to take charge of the bridge of a ship? Cleaning brass and washing paintwork. Had he ever been up aloft, leaning on his belly over a yard, with his feet jerking

STORM

wildly in the swaying footropes behind him, and the harsh slatting canvas ripping his nails off as he fought to crowd it under and get the gaskets round it? Had he ever hung to a madly kicking wheel, running down before a Cape Horn gale, with seas lifting their foam crested heads over the taffrail, threatening to hurl themselves on him and smash him to Eternity? When one slip, one moment's loss of nerve, and the ship might broach to, with God knows what result.

The boy was too young. Untried. He couldn't leave him alone on the bridge on a night like this. Particularly coasting.

Coasting! There should be some sign of the lights on the mainland yonder. Unless it is thick over the land. The lights might be obscured.

He ducked for a moment as a volley of stinging spray swept over the bridge, and moved across to where, a blacker patch in the blackness, young Parker stood in the starboard wing, peering round the edge of the cab.

"Seen any light yet?" he bawled through his hollowed hands into the youngster's ear.

"No Sir." The reply was snatched away and hurled aft, and with it went young Parker's cap; torn from his head as he turned to answer the question. Whisked off into nothingness, leaving his longish hair streaming and flapping about his forehead.

"Jump up on to monkey island and see if you can see anything from there. Steady her on at the same time."

"Aye Aye, Sir." The boy melted into the blackness, and again Henderson crouched behind the dodger, staring over the top with narrowed, wind wrinkled eyes.

Aye! Times had changed. The War had come along. Wages had gone up. Conditions had bettered themselves. Young Parker up there, he didn't know what going to sea

STORM

was. Not five years at sea, third officer of a big steamer, with only a second's ticket, and getting double what he himself had had as mate of the sailing ships with a master's ticket.

Captain Henderson was one of the old school. The methods of the days when navigational secrets, the ship's position, the true course, the track on the chart and the distance run were jealously guarded by the captain, still lingered with him. Young Parker was of use as a lookout man on the bridge and to do odd jobs under his personal instruction, but he could not regard him as a responsible officer. It seemed only yesterday when, as chief officer of the "Roman Eagle," he had met the boy, then a small, pale faced first-voyage apprentice, and as such he still regarded him. So, on a night like this, particularly coasting on a, to them, new and unknown coast, Henderson always kept the eight to twelve watch himself, and attended to everything with regard to laying off and altering courses without letting Parker know anything about what he was doing. Which was unfair both to Parker and to Henderson himself, for two heads are always better than one, particularly for the remembering of details, and, as Henderson realised later, we are all liable to forget things sometimes.

This was a new and unknown coast for them on this occasion, because for once in her career the "Roman Centurion" was outward bound via the Canal. The outward bound Australian mail boat had been in collision in the Thames Estuary and had been forced to return to port, and the "Roman Centurion," on the eve of her sailing, had been taken to fill her place.

"Nothing in sight Sir." Parker was back again, shouting in his ear. "The compasses are unaltered."

Henderson nodded, and the other moved away and stood staring out from the starboard wing again, showing in dim

STORM

mis-shapen silhouette as the flights of green glared spray shot past the side light.

It was a pity that Henderson had become so set in his ideas. That he would not realise that times had changed in more than wages and living conditions, and that a steam-boat officer could be a good man at his own particular job, even though he was not a sailing ship man. His attitude towards young Parker left the boy with no actual knowledge of what the ship was doing, relegated him to the position of a lookout man and a messenger, and furthermore, engendered in him an inferiority complex and an unwholesome awe of his captain which amounted almost to fear.

From one of the voice tubes which reared their brass-lidded mouthpieces above the teakwood rail beside Henderson, a low, continuous wailing sound came. Rising and falling slightly, but unceasing. A thin thread of sound drawn across the background of the storm's full throated bellow, faint but insistent. Somewhere in one of the pipes the wind had found a reed upon which it could flute, the wail of a soul in pain.

In pain. God! Was that operation over yet? Was she dead? The specialist had promised to wireless him as soon as the result was known. He should have heard by now.

And his mind raced on. He thought of all the things he had heard of operations. That white enamelled stretcher arrangement on rubber tyred wheels they pushed about the ward and into the operating theatre, with still figures like corpses lying on it. The smell of iodine and chemists' shops. The choking, gasping, fighting for breath as the anæsthetic was applied. The knife!

Someone cannoned into him from behind, and muttering words he could not hear, moved on into the starboard cab

STORM

where stood young Parker. There was a faint clatter of crockery, and the newcomer moved off again, staggering with bowed head across the bridge against the wind's fury, groping his way to the ladder at the after end.

Parker's voice sounded again in his ear. "What's that?" he yelled back.

"Some coffee Sir?"

"No thanks."

The knife. Could the chloroform or whatever they used really deaden all feeling? Supposing it wasn't strong enough, and she came to whilst the damned knife was still carving at her. Supposing it was too strong, and deadened all feeling for all time.

There seemed to be some little devil in his brain which kept suggesting things to him. Sawbones! That was what Sam Weller called them in *Pickwick Papers*. Surgeons. Sawbones! And suddenly his teeth went all on edge, and he thought of that horrible grating, squeaking noise made by a piece of grit or something in the chalk, when the teacher at the small school he had attended as a boy had been writing on the blackboard. And the feeling made him think of chewing rag, or glossy paper, and he drew his upper lip in against his teeth to fight the feeling down.

If only he could see Jessie now. If only for one moment. Just touch her. Stroke her hand and face. He had never been much good at telling her how he loved her. He couldn't say "I do love you," it had always been against his nature. When she asked him, he could always say "Yes", wholeheartedly, but to say it himself had seemed theatrical, embarrassing, like making a public avowal of his most secret thoughts and beliefs. But if he could only be with her now, to show her how much she was to him. And it was too

STORM

late. Every thing seemed empty and hopeless, and as he gripped the rail until his finger nails were numb with the pressure, he felt absolutely alone, alone and tragically helpless.

Again someone, fighting his way across the bridge, bumped into him and said something.

"What's that?" Henderson raised his voice to a shout.

"Wheel's relieved Sir. South Eighty East."

"Aye Aye!" Then it must be eight bells. He hadn't heard it struck.

There was a louder boom from forward, a heavier rattle of spray on the bridge, a noisier cascade of white water over the break of the forecastle head and on to the well deck. For a dizzying moment the bows of the ship swung in mid space, circling as though choosing a place where to drop, and then down she plunged again, scooping up the sea in tons. In a solid mass it swept along, thundered on to the well deck, and the spray shot in a blinding, lashing sheet over all. The "Roman Centurion" quivered and throbbed as her racing propellers beat the surface of the sea aft, and pulsated as she slowly recovered herself.

That was a big one. Or perhaps the new man at the wheel had let her run off a bit, and brought her back too suddenly.

An impalpable figure in the blackness, sensing rather than seeing him.

"Jenkins relieved the lookout Sir."

"Right."

Henderson moved over to the starboard cab, and bumped into some one standing there. "That you, Parker?"

"No Sir. It's Travers."

"Ah!" It was the second officer, come to relieve the bridge for the middle watch. "It must be thick over the land. We haven't seen any lights since eight o'clock. Where's Parker?"

STORM

"Here Sir." A voice from the blackness of the cab answered the question.

"What was on the log at eight bells?"

"A hundred and forty-two Sir."

"A hundred and forty two." Henderson spoke his thoughts aloud. "I wish we could have seen something of those lights. This damned sea's holding her up. We should have seen something by now."

There was silence for a moment, save for the shouting of the wind and the rushing water.

"I suppose it must be thick over the land Sir." Travers had no other explanation to offer.

"It must be. I'm going into the chartroom for a while. Keep a good lookout, and let me know at once if you see anything."

"Very good Sir."

Henderson fought his way to the chartroom. There was a gleam on the shining wet ventilators and samson posts abaft the bridge as he swung the door open and the shaft of light from the warm interior shot across the blackness, and then the door slammed to behind him, and the light was abruptly cut off again.

Inside the chartroom it was cosy and warm. The sound of the fury outside was considerably diminished. The blows of the sea foward, the racking throbbing of the racing propellers were, perhaps, intensified, but for all that the warm lighted room was a haven of peace in the surrounding chaos. Henderson took off his dripping sou'wester and flung it into the waste paper basket, and removing his wet oilskin coat, he hung it on the brass thumbscrew of one of the ports and sat down on the settee.

Now, as he sat there, he realised how tired he was. The continual strain of this thinking of Jessie, the maddening

STORM

uncertainty added to the responsibility of his job, had taken it out of him. He had an intense desire to lie down for a moment.

There was a fumbling at the door handle, and with a sudden crescendo of the muffled shrieking of the world outside, the door burst open and slammed to again and Parker, dripping and shining, his hair dank and streaked over his forehead, burst into the room.

He maintained a respectful silence, and moving over to the table, selected a pen to write up the log for the eight to twelve watch.

"How's the glass?" asked Henderson from the settee.

"Steady Sir" replied Parker after consulting the barometer swinging on the bulkhead. "Twenty-nine sixty. No change since eight o'clock."

"Nothing in sight, I suppose?"

"No Sir."

Parker's pen scratched slowly over the log book, and Henderson idly watched the water dripping off the near corner of the boy's long oilskin coat on to the toe of his rubber sea boot as he bent over the table. At last the job was finished.

"Goodnight Sir."

"Goodnight. Tell Mr. Travers to let me know at once if he sees anything."

"Very good Sir."

Again the inburst of the storm. Again the slam of the door, and quiet warm peace by comparison.

The oilskin coat hung on the port directly opposite to Captain Henderson. As the bows of the "Roman Centurion" swung upwards on a sea, slowly, in little jerks, delayed by the friction of the panelled bulkhead against which it slid, the coat swung aft, a clumsy black shining pendulum. As

STORM

she plunged downwards it swung forwards again, in little hesitating steps, an inch or so at a time. Back and forth, forward, aft, forward, aft, and slowly, as it hypnotized the weary watcher, his head dropped forward, forward, forward.

He did not realise he had been asleep until suddenly the startled voice of Parker wrenched him back to consciousness. What was he saying? Course?

It was two bells, one o'clock in the morning, before Parker reached his room after leaving the bridge. He was a garrulous youth, and after yarning with Travers for a while before going below, had met the fourth engineer, himself also just off watch, and comparing notes and reminiscing with him had taken up more time. Parker had been round the passenger accommodation to make sure that everything was all right before turning in, and had met Duncan the engineer in the starboard working alleyway, just by the engine room door. It was nice and warm there, with the deep beat of the twin reciprocating engines throbbing in the air, and the smell of hot oil. They had smoked a couple of cigarettes, the brightly lit, white enamelled alleyway being remote from the storm outside, cutting it off, making another world altogether apart from that of the windswept wetness outside.

Two bells was struck as he switched on the light in his room, and it was then, with a sudden qualm, that he saw the buff coloured envelope lying on his table, and realised that he had forgotten to give to the captain the wireless message which had been entrusted to him by the wireless operator for delivery before he had gone on watch at eight o'clock. Curse it. The only thing to do was to take it up now and make an open confession of his forgetfulness. Parker could have kicked himself. He knew that the captain didn't trust him, hadn't much reliance in him, and this would only make matters worse.

STORM

Travers, to whom he confided his fears, was full of the optimism of the unaffected looker-on. "He's still in the chartroom" he replied to Parker's query. "Go in and give it to him. He can't kill you. Damn!" He cursed and ducked as the ship took a big dive and the spray leapt hissing over the bridge. "Swine of a night."

To make matters worse, as Parker found when he entered the chartroom, Henderson was asleep. Bad enough to have to admit his fault in the ordinary way, but to have to wake the captain up to do it was tough.

It was as he was summoning up his courage to call Henderson, that his eye fell on the course pencilled by the captain on the chart, and he looked to get an idea of the approximate position of the ship. Henderson had put a cross to mark where the ship should have been at midnight. Parker's eye ran idly back along the line to where it changed its angle by about ten degrees. "Nine o'clock" was written in Henderson's handwriting at the point of alteration, and suddenly Parker's interest was aroused. He picked up a pair of dividers. Three hours at twelve knots. He measured the distance back from the midnight position. Yes! That brought him to the point of alteration. But the course hadn't been altered at nine o'clock. He looked at the direction in which the original course was taking the ship, the course she was on now, and suddenly, forgetting wireless messages and everything save the frightful urgency of this new development, he was shaking Henderson frantically.

"Captain Henderson. Sir." Parker's voice was urgent, insistent. "The course. The course. You didn't alter the course at nine o'clock. She's still steering North Eighty five East true, and the chart——"

And then the sudden realisation came to Henderson, and to them both leapt the same thought. Galita. The rock

STORM

girt, unlighted island, standing directly in their path as they were now steering. That was why they had seen no lights on the mainland. The course should have been altered at nine o'clock. He had forgotten, and instead of following the coast round, the "Roman Centurion" had been steering direct for Galita.

For how long?

"What time is it?"

"Just on three bells. She must be on it Sir. I brought this message up which I forgot to give you last night, and saw that you had marked off the course to be altered at nine o'clock and 'knew you hadn't altered it and——"

"Just on three bells." Henderson mechanically took the message from Parker and crammed it unopened into his pocket. "Just on three bells." And suddenly the full understanding of the position burst on his consciousness, seared itself on his brain in a numbing flash which for the moment deprived him of all power of thought and action, and to the watching Parker he seemed to sag and become limp and flaccid on the settee.

"Christ! Christ!! You've fair knocked the guts out of me."

Stamped on his mind in an indelible impression was the vision of a towering crag of rock leaping to meet them from the blackness ahead. A splitting, rending crash. The roaring of crunching plates, of fifteen thousand tons of steel tearing into fragments, grinding to pieces on the jagged teeth of the sea, the better to be assimilated in its insatiable maw. Of seven hundred lives under his charge.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Do something Sir, for God's sake. And do it quick." In this hour of stress it was an unknown Parker speaking. It was the first time he had been appealed to by the captain,

STORM

and the call for instant action found him ready. He was the onlooker. The second urging the principal to fight. He was only one of the seven hundred, with only one life to lose. The responsibility, the forgetfulness, the mistake, they were not his. Henderson had seven hundred lives to lose, the blame to be borne by him alone, and the realisation which stunned him spurred the other on to act.

"If I go on we may hit it. If I port or starboard we may hit it."

"Turn her right round Sir. Go back as we've come, it's the only thing to do."

Together they raced on to the bridge, the chartroom door swinging wildly behind them. Henderson had mastered himself again now.

"Hard aport." The wheel spokes raced under the startled helmsman's hands, startled at the sudden urgency of the unexpected command.

"Stop starboard. Full astern starboard." Travers, galvanised into immediate action by this new force which had come like a thunderclap to take charge of the bridge, jumped from his retreat in the starboard wing to the engine telegraphs, and the bells clanged a response from below.

Henderson clung to the teakwood rail, the wind tearing at his face and hair, oblivious of the spray which lashed him like hail, with only one thought, only one prayer.

"Oh Christ! Grant she will clear. Grant she will clear."

The "Roman Centurion" shuddered and shook under the immense twisting strain put upon her. As she came round, a sea hit her on the flare of the port bow, struck her a blow which seemed to fetch everything up dead. Broke over her in an avalanche of white foaming water, leapt in sheets of stinging spray above her very funnel.

Round she came, and as she fell into the trough of the sea

STORM

she rolled, rolled as though she would fling everything clear of her, would catapult everything off her streaming decks into the howling waste around, and below in the pantries, crockery and pots and pans crashed to destruction, and shovels and slices clattered across the stokehold plates, and men clung grimly to whatever offered support. As she rolled to windward, the screaming fury of the wind whipped itself against her in a frenzy of skirling shrieks, and the seas smashed along her entire length.

Slowly she came round. Slowly, as she brought the full force of wind and sea astern, she steadied, and suddenly, the relative positions of wind and sea and ship having changed, she was riding almost smoothly, yawing and rolling slightly as a big sea came up under her counter and spewed hissing ahead from beneath her forefoot, but running dry and unbuffeted, running silently in comparison with the tremendous diapason which had swept about and through her whilst she was steaming into the gale.

For two hours after the ship had been steadied on her new course and the engines were both going full ahead again, Captain Henderson clung to the bridge rail, staring into the blackness ahead, dreading a sudden crash which never came, an awful materialisation of the dread vision which had stamped itself on his brain back there in the chartroom. What he went through in that time no man may know, but it was a nightmare which rode beside him for ever after, a terror which would drag him shaking from his sleep in later years, and will go down with him to his grave.

Later on in the morning, when a bright sun in the cloudless sky had transformed the leaping blackness of the night into a field of tumbling blue and white, when the falling wind which tossed the glittering spray drops was but a playful child shaking the signal halliards and chasing the smoke

STORM

from the funnel, Parker came into Henderson's room to apologise for having forgotten the wireless message. The ship was back on her proper course again, dipping and plunging easily, and the sun, shining through the ports of the room, sent blobs of light tripping across the deck, touching with gold everything on which they rested as they passed. The mainland coast stretched blue along the star-board beam. Galita, robbed of its terror by the light, was broad on the port bow.

The mention of the wireless message at first conveyed nothing to Henderson. Now, at the other's prompting, he drew it from his pocket and tore open the envelope with trembling fingers, whilst the boy stammered a halting apology.

Then, as he grasped the significance of the scribbled pencilled lines on the flimsy sheet of paper, shaking with emotion, his voice choking as he fumbled his words, he gripped the boy's hand and then waved him from the room.

"The old man's a funny chap," said young Parker to Travers afterwards. "I thought he'd be as wild as hell about that message I forgot, but he apologised to me instead. 'It won't occur again, Parker,' he said. 'It won't occur again. I'm sorry, but don't you worry my son. We all make mistakes sometimes.'"

"What did he want to apologise to you for?" asked the mystified Travers.

"Damned if I know" answered Parker.

And to Captain Henderson, as the tears of relief splashed on to the crumpled paper lying before him, came an echo to the cry of his own soul, the voice of the lookout man answering eight bells from the crow's nest in a long drawn cry, "A-a-alls Well."

The Vicar of Dunkerly Briggs

THE Dean and Fellows of Crispin's College, in Oxford, were expecting great things from John Atwater. They expected him to carry away from the forthcoming Final Schools in Modern Literature as brilliant a First as the college had known for years. The college servants on his staircase, the messenger, the gardener's boy, all expected as much from him. It was only John Atwater himself who was not quite so confident. He was feeling jaded.

He had been doing far too much lately. He had written a novel which the publishers' readers considered as good as the work of most professional novelists. He had edited a University Magazine which required as much industry as ferocity. He had been Secretary of the College Beagles and Lector of the White Rose Society. He had been . . . the point was he had been in love. He could have managed all the rest standing on his head, but he had been in love. That wretched tow-haired Russian girl . . . As you see, he was not in love any longer. If he had been, it would have sustained him through a cycle of novels and a dozen Final Schools. He hated her. He saw through her. The discovery left him limp as chewed string.

He was thoroughly out of sorts, and the examination was

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

less than a week ahead. He would muff it miserably, he who had never known what it was to be second to anybody in anything. So it was that he determined to cut clean away for a few days, from the lecture-rooms and the libraries and anything that reminded him of . . . grrr ! . . . he refused to let himself even utter her name. He would take a ruck-sack and walking-stick and tramp northward into the lonely region of Otmoor. He would sleep out in barns or under hedges, or, if the weather was unsuitable, in one or other of the quiet inns upon the fringe of the moor.

The college authorities understood. They were solicitous. They beamed upon him. He had determined to keep his mind completely carefree, and to read not even a newspaper, not even, if he could help it, the notices for the cattle-shows pasted up upon barn-walls. But he could not resist, at the last moment, thrusting his *Beowulf* and his *Anglo-Saxon Syntax* into a corner of his ruck-sack. He was rather shaky on these two subjects. Perhaps, if he felt completely himself again, he might take a gentle glance at them on his way back into Oxford. He remembered also his reading-glasses. Very studious they were, with thick lenses like the bottoms of lemonade-bottles. Pince-nez upon the bridge of his nose, reading-glasses in his ruck-sack, walking-stick in hand, John Atwater set forth northward for Otmoor and spirit's ease.

The whole of that first day was exquisitely eventless. The sound of its birds and winds blended into a symphony he did not hear with his conscious mind ; its flowers and grasses were knit into a tapestry that flapped lazily behind his eyes. He could almost hear his brain unfolding in the easy air with faint crepitations. At evening a village presented itself, and there was an inn at the heart of it. It seemed that he uttered no word, yet food was set before him and bed clothes

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

smelling of lavender turned down for him. Dawn came, heralded by an urgent blackbird. He jumped out of bed, and into a hip-bath which he filled with icy water out of two large enamel ewers. He set forth, whistling vigorously, into the heart of Otmoor.

This was grand, he said to himself. Two or three more days of such refreshment for soul and body, and he was fit for anything. He felt ambition stir in him again. His hand reached furtively for the Anglo-Saxon Syntax. No, no ! he insisted. I'm going to get back to Oxford unjaded, like a lion from the drinking-pool.

It was in the late afternoon that he came across a small gipsy encampment on the edge of a thicket. It was hardly an encampment, for the gipsies had neither roof to their heads, nor anything much to put under it if they had one. There was a certain amount of sacking lying about and a few osiers. Beyond this there were a few cutting implements and a small mound of chips. The chips were in process of being converted into clothes-pegs, but the work had been laid aside a few minutes ago, while the young man with hair like pale straw blew at a twig-fire, and the young girl with black hair like a yew tree boiled a billy-can of tea on it. A man and woman of middle age, presumably the girl's parents, both very dark, both smoking short clay pipes, leaned back against the twisted stumps of two hawthorns.

"Good-day, maister !" said the man. "Fine day !"

"Fine day indeed !" John replied with alacrity. He suddenly realized how thirsty he was, and that he was a little cold and tired.

"How about a cup of tay, maister ?" asked the woman. "Nothen' like a cup of tay to warm up the insides !"

"Delightful," said John. "It's awfully kind of you !"
He sat down. The youth lifted the handle of the boiling

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

billy-can with a twig. The girl rummaged about under the sacking and produced a tin and an enamel cup. She threw a large handful of tea into the water and poured into the cup a liquor which almost instantaneously ran black as pitch.

"You first!" said John politely. It was evident that the kitchen contained one cup only. She smiled her insistence at him. Her eyes were blacker than the tea, blacker than a coal-cellar, blacker than anything he had ever seen. Her lips were bright red, like haws on the bare thorn. The eyes of the youth with hair like straw moved with the movement of her eyes and lips and hands, as if the same set of nerves directed them.

"Thanks immensely!" said John. There was no milk, no sugar. He did not remark their absence. He had a vision of droves of undergraduates sipping from their fragile cups in awkward drawing-rooms in North Oxford. They extended their little fingers as they raised the cups. They reached for small and silly sandwiches. "A slice from the loaf?" the man enquired.

"And a lump of cheese?" the woman supplemented.

He ate and drank as if he had known his hosts for years. He did not talk. No one talked. He perceived how late and unimportant an invention speech was, in the history of social relationship. The man, the woman and the youth took out short clay pipes. John offered the girl a cigarette. She took it. Her smile wrinkled up the corners of her eyes. Her mouth puffed open to take the cigarette like a folded poppy blown suddenly apart.

The company was not wholly silent. The man, the woman, the girl uttered a word or two. Only the youth neither moved nor spoke. He did not turn his eyes away from the girl's black eyes. His body, heavy and uncouth as it was, trembled faintly as her mouth or hand moved.

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

"It's clear," mused John. "The man and the woman are her parents. She has the man's eyes and the woman's nose, that queer high-lifted bridge. The boy's her lover. And no gipsy either. It's not the romany blood that's fed the blue-grey eyes and the dull yellow hair. How the boy loves her! How she loves him!"

The girl put the enamel cup and the billy-can back under the sacking. The man wiped his knife on his knee. There were three other knives lying about.

"Time to be gotten' on with the pegs," said the man. The others took their knives without a word, and set to work. John looked on and marvelled, so featly the cheap knives stripped the surfaces and gouged out the curves. Now and again the women rested their dark eyes on him and smiled. It was only to the girl's eyes the youth lifted his. The man worked steadily and speedily.

"We're hopen'," the man said out of the silence, "to be buyen' a new moke soon." The remark seemed intended to explain why he kept so hard at it.

"The last one," said the youth suddenly, speaking for the first time, "died of bronchitis! It was a shame! It need not have happened!"

The quality of his voice was as astonishing as the clarity of his enunciation. There was a gentleness and precision about both. They accorded strangely with the crude mop of hair and the rough yellow scrub on his cheeks and the knobbled hands.

"Hush! Hush!" the girl whispered. "Don't take on so!"

The knives glimmered and glanced. John sat looking on, less like a stranger who had not suspected the existence of these people half an hour ago, than like the small boy of the family. In a year, perhaps, they would let him, too, handle a

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

knife and cut a clothes-peg. For the present he was as likely to take his thumb off.

"I say," he said, exactly like that small boy. "May I have a shot at one?" There was a note of anxiety in his voice. He was in the habit of doing things well, and those things all, at this moment, seemed trivial things to do compared with the cutting of clothes-pegs with jack-knives.

The man looked up under his steep brows. "Mind your finger, maister!" he said. "Them blades is sharp! Give 'im your knife, Sal!"

Laughter was in the nest of her throat, like a small bird stirring its wings. "Like this," she said, "hold it like this!"

He cut the first peg badly, the second not so badly. Silence was amongst them again. The man and the woman worked without pause. The shock-headed youth sliced and slashed and looked up to the pippin-red cheeks of his darling; his jaw dropped, the knife and the chip slid from his fingers. Then he started and took them in hand again. John hove away manfully, such peace and such felicity upon him as he had never known before. The girl leaned back upon the palms of her hands, her body bent slightly like a young tree in the path of a prevailing sea-wind.

It did not occur to John that he should not camp out this night among the gipsies. It was not merely that, speechlessly and effortlessly, like a dream flowing or like water flowing, they had accepted him as one of themselves. He was not any remoter from them than the lovelorn youth with yellow hair. They had stolen John Atwater, too, as they had stolen the other one, when they were both children, and their nursemaids had looked the other way; and the gipsies, who had, after all, not been trees or the shadow of trees, had caught him up suddenly and stifled his cries in a thick blanket and carried him away beyond a hundred villages

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

—him and the other one with such blue eyes and hair like wind-havocked corn. It did not occur to John that he should not camp out this night among his people.

Dusk came towards them from low down, like a flock of grey birds coming out of the southward thicket.

“You two,” said the man, “you’d best be putten’ it up!” He meant the women. They rose at once and proceeded to draw out the osiers from under the sacking and to cross them cunningly over in arcs, fixing their pointed ends into the ground. They then pulled the sacking over the taut framework till such a small bivouac was ready for them, snug and dark, as primitive wanderers the world over, in steppe and desert, foothill and prairie, know how to fashion for themselves. The man, being the best craftsman among them went on whittling away at the clothes-pegs while there was still light. The youth rose and taking in hand a bill-hook, swayed over to the ditch on his huge limbs. He bent down towards the nettles and dock that grew there and laid them low in a series of sharp lunges. Of course. The youth’s bed was in the ditch. You could have told that from the burrs and straw in his hair and the caked mud on him. Besides, it would be as much as the man and the woman and the girl could do to lie down in that small tent with any comfort. And if it were larger, you’d not be thinking the youth and the girl would be sleeping together in so small a space the night long.

“And me?” asked John. “Is there room for me too at your head or feet?”

The youth showed his even compact teeth as he smiled. He held out the bill-hook. “Would you like to cut down the roses for yourself?”

“It’s damp!” the girl called out from inside the tent. “You won’t like it!”

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

John was not to be put off so lightly. He swaggered across to the ditch and assaulted the dank weeds. He did not make much progress. "Let me!" said the other.

"It's damp!" the woman called out. Her voice was a shade more peremptory.

John saw the moisture welling up between the chopped stalks. A small reptile—it may have been a large insect—crawled away down the channel. A wisp of cold air, which the clearing of the tangle seemed to have liberated, crawled up his trouser-leg. A bead of cold sweat moved down the centre of his forehead. John looked mournfully from the ditch into the youth's eyes and down to the ditch again.

"It's naught to me," said the youth. "I'm used to it."

"If the genelman likes it—" the man said, collecting the finished clothes-pegs and heaping them under a piece of sacking.

The genelman . . .

It was as if a flame that had been burning inside him were put out. A desolation fell on him. He felt a dull rheumaticky ache under his left kneecap. He'd never got over it, since they'd wrenched it out in the final against Magdalen.

A genelman . . . alas, alas, he was nothing but a genelman, after all. With what exquisite courtesy they had been making believe he was something more, all this while. They had not stolen him away early enough from his nursemaid.

He tried to speak. A fine soot seemed to have sifted into the back of his throat. "I say, I say!" he brought out hoarsely.

The youth raised his untidy brows.

"Is there . . . is there—" John swallowed hard—"is there a village round about here?"

The youth repeated the question. The man was inside the tent now, taking his boots off.

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

"Let me see now, maister ! There'll be Ottenden up along the moor there. How far ? Six or seven miles I'd reckon. When once you hit the cart track . . . What's that you're sayen', mother ?"

"Let him take the other way !" the woman called out. "Goen' through the woods, Dunkerly Briggs can't be but a mile or two away !"

"For sure," the man said. "I'd be able to get a . . . a bed for the night ?" asked John, again swallowing a lump of mortification.

"'Twould be surer in Ottenden. There's two or three publics that lets beds there. There's just one old woman as runs the "Lion" in Dunkerly and two beds is full house with her."

"They'd all be shut dead in Ottenden," the woman said, "by the time the genelman got there."

"I think," John murmured, "if you'd just give me an idea what way Dunkerly Briggs lies—"

"He'd get lost !" the girl called out firmly.

"Will ! You best take him along !"

"Yes, Sal !"

"I say ! It's awfully kind of you ! Of all of you !" John hovered awkwardly. Money ? How could he offer money ?

"When you marry and settle down," the girl cried merrily, "tell your lady to get her clothes-pegs from us ! Move on, Will ! He'll be lucky to get to the 'Lion' in time, as it is !" "Goodnight ! Goodnight to you !" "Goodnight, maister ! Good luck go with you !"

The two young men walked in silence for some time, John treading closely behind the other, out of the hawthorn-brake, into a wood of stunted pines, round again into a thicket of thorn and bramble. When a word passed John's lips, it so surprised him that he was hardly sure which of them had uttered it.

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

"She's lovely!" he said.

The youth stopped. He stared through the owl-light hard up against John's eyes. He was reassured.

"Aye," he said. "She's lovely!"

Thereafter she walked with them. Her hair was the cobwebs that brushed their faces. Her breath was the odour of some musky herb they trod on. Where the way permitted, the two young men walked side by side. Sometimes the youth spoke of their adventures by field and hedgerow, of the donkey that had died, of the van he and she hoped to possess some day. Then no word passed between them. The last light, refracted into the east out of the sunset, was drained away in the moor's dykes.

"And this," said the youth, "is Dunkerly Briggs! There is the green. That's the duck-pond on your left. The 'Lion's' open still. There mister, where you see them lights."

"What luck!" said John. "No, don't go off now. Come along, let's have a drink!"

The youth held back awkwardly.

"I insist!" said John. "Hang it all!"

The young man from Oxford and the youth from the weedy ditches of Otmoor strode forward across the green. The light in the parlour of the "Lion" was pleasantly softened by rosy chintz curtains.

"Look!" the youth said suddenly: "There's someone looking out of the window there! It's the old dame, I suppose!"

"I didn't see anyone," said John easily. "I suppose it is late for guests to be coming in out of the moor!" The pair stood within the warm circuit of the diffused light. "Thank the Lord we're not *too* late! Hello, what've they put the light out for?"

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

"Like what I said!" the youth said. "You'd best try and get in alone, see? Or there'll be no bed for you tonight!"

"But why . . . what on earth . . . ?" Then John stopped short. For one brief instant he beheld his companion with disenchanted eyes, as he might have seemed to him if he saw him the first time this very moment, coming towards him out of the dark moor. He beheld the lurching tough he was, with grim-jowled head thrust forward from uneven shoulders, the coarse towsled hair, the huge knotted hands.

"Will, old chap," he implored. "You won't mind waiting just till I let the old lady see its all right?" The youth was already moving away into the darkness. "Don't go," John called out after him, in a loud whisper. "Oh, please don't go!" He was desperately afraid of hurting his feelings. "All right!" the other whispered. "I'll wait if you want me to!"

With somewhat exaggerated ease John strolled up to the door of the inn; at the very moment he took the door-knob in hand, he felt a bolt slide into place on the inner side of the door. His heart sank.

"Hello!" he called out. "Hello inside there!" There was no reply. "Hello! If you don't mind! It can't be closing-time yet!" There was no reply. He shook the door vigorously. It really was very awkward. He *must* get into a decent bed tonight. He knocked hard at the panels two or three times. "Hello! Hello!" There was no reply. "What the hell's wrong?" he called out. "Why don't you open?" There was no sound. He beat a tattoo with his fists.

There was the sound of a click above his head. He withdrew a few yards from the door and looked up. A small window had been cautiously opened. A head, or a nose at least, had been thrust through the chink.

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

"Go away! Go away!" an old voice quivered. "Go away at once!"

"I will *not* go away! I want a bed for the night! And something to eat and drink! You can't turn me away like this!"

"There's no room here! Go away! Go away!"

"Now look here, mother, what's all this nonsense about—"

"If you don't go away, I'll shoot you! Yes, I will! And him, too!"

"Him? I say, don't be ridiculous! I just wanted——"

The window closed to again. "Hi!" John bawled out. "Hi there!" He looked round helplessly towards his companion. He saw his thick hulk looming indistinctly up against the faint sheen of the duck-pond. Or was it indeed the same youth, the yellow-haired one, whom the gipsies had stolen, who so loved his black-eyed maiden that he shivered through all his frame like a nervous lap-dog, when she said a word to him? He looked much more like an amorphous monument of Evil or Old Night, chiselled out of crude stone. And then, in a flash of realization, he perceived the sweet grotesqueness of the situation. He perceived, as his companion had already perceived, that to the poor old lady in her isolated public house the spectacle of two young men emerging from the moor and the darkness could not itself have been very engaging. If the travellers had been two gentlemen, or two roughs, she might not have been unduly troubled. But how came two such contrasted young men to be walking forward so game and friendly? And the shaggy one—why did he hang back in the darkness, whilst the smart one came forward, with that sinister sack hung from his shoulders? What was all that whispering and signalling? Evidently it was a plant. The smart one did the oily speech-making, got an entrance into the house of

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

the intended victim, and then, when the house was shut up for the night, he opened it up for the rough one. As for what happened then . . .

Loud and sudden the laughter echoed from John's lips. "Ha! Ha! Ha!" he volleyed. "Ha! Ha! Ha! John Atwater the Gentleman Cracksman!" The laughter ceased just as suddenly, so lugubriously it sounded in his own ear. He seized a handful of gravel and threw it up at the old lady's window. "Listen!" he shouted. "Won't you? Dear lady, please listen!" A note of poignant entreaty entered his supplication. There was no sound or sight of her. He searched for a large stone and cried fiercely: "I'll smash that window, do you hear, if you don't open it? Do you hear?"

The window was raised an inch or two. The muzzle of some antique fire-arm was thrust through. It shook like a leaf in the old hand that held it.

"Dear lady, it's hateful of you to make me behave like this! I'm John Atwater, I tell you, an undergraduate from Oxford. Won't you please come down and let me have a bed for the night? The fellow over there—he's a stranger to me. I just met him this afternoon. I wanted to give him a drink."

"Go away, I tell you, go away!"

"If you think there's anything wrong with me, look. You can have all the money I've got, till tomorrow morning!" In his desperation he had removed his wallet from his breast-pocket and taken out the five or six pound notes it contained. Almost immediately he realized how stupid the act was. The money was evidently the haul from his last victim. The notes were sticky with hair and blood.

"I tell you it's loaded! Go away! If you don't, I'll shoot!"

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

"For God's sake, shoot!" he cried furiously. He thrust his ribs forward in the direction of the fire-arm.

She did not shoot. The old woman suddenly broke down into a fit of inexpressibly melancholy weeping. "Please, please, kind gentleman. . . ."

"Oh hell!" said John. He turned on his heel and strode over to join the youth on the edge of the duck-pond.

"I'm terrible sorry!" the youth said.

"My dear fellow, not at all, not at all! The old imbecile!" he ground out between his teeth. "Well, here I am! Here we are! What am I to do about it?"

"She *was* scared and no mistake! I shouldn't have come this far! That's what the matter is!"

"No, please! I'd have got lost on the moor without you! Though this doesn't seem much more cheerful, does it? What *can* a fellow do?"

"If you'd like to come back along of me——"

"Oh thanks! Thanks awfully!" The ditch, the dock, the thistles, the ooze! John trembled slightly. It was not merely cold. There was a hint of rain in the air.

"How about the porch of the church yonder? It feels a bit like rain! It would keep you dry anyway!"

"The church? Where? Oh I see! Just beyond that group of houses there! What's that big house beyond? That's the vicarage surely? Ye Gods, what a fool I am! Of course! Of course!"

The words tumbled from his lips. He slapped his thighs delightedly. Of course! The vicar! The vicar of the place! He'd be an educated man. Perhaps an Oxford man, even! He'd go along and explain the situation. Of course, a poor old peasant lady in a lonely inn could hardly help making such a mistake under the slightly odd circumstances. He'd go along to the vicar. They'd have a hearty laugh over it

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

—and a whisky-and-soda too. Then the vicar would just come back with him and make it right with the poor old dear. He'd be in bed in half-an-hour or so. A hot water bottle and a dash of whiskey in a pint of hot lemonade would kill the cold that threatened him, stone-dead.

Even if it meant rousing the jolly old vicar out of bed. . . .

"I say, old chap," cried John. "We'll not make the same mistake this time. You won't mind just waiting a bit out of the way this time? I'm going to explain the whole shoot to the vicar. He'll make the old dame see sense. And then we'll all lift a glass together, eh?"

"Best not," said the youth, "have me about. You'd best not be seeing me again at all. I'll wait till I know you're fixed for the night, see?"

"My dear fellow ——"

"Goodnight!" the youth called out. He was already shambling away into the deeper darkness.

"Goodnight! What a sport you are! I'll hunt you all up again tomorrow!"

John's eyes were beginning to make out more clearly the general outlines of Dunkerly Briggs. There were small houses on all sides of the green, excepting the side that faced towards Otmoor. But they were a race that went early to bed in Dunkerly. Not a light burned in a single window. The vicarage, too, was dark and silent. None the less, John knocked firmly on the front door. The vicar could hardly be in bed so early as this. Probably his study was on the other side of the house. He knocked again. He peered through the glass panels of the door. There was no reply. He knocked a third time. And then at length, somewhere far down the dark lobby, an inner door opened, throwing a distorted rhomboid of light upon wall and floor. A square-shouldered clerical figure was outlined against the light for

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

one moment, hovering there anxiously. Then it advanced with an almost exaggerated firmness of foot and, drawing a bolt and loosening a chain, it opened the door about nine or ten inches.

"Oh, sir, I'm frightfully sorry! Please forgive me! It's perfectly filthy of me to disturb you like this. But the fact is——" The words tumbled out of John's mouth precipitately, like peas from a split bag. "The fact is the old lady at the Lion—— You see, it's a wretched mistake and the poor old thing——"

"One moment, sir, one moment," came the clipped syllables of the clergyman. He opened the door another three inches. "What is all this about? Who are you?"

"Oh, I say, *do* open the door, won't you? I mean—I assure you, I'm perfectly all right! My name's John Atwater. I'm an undergraduate at Crispin's. You're an Oxford man, sir, aren't you?" The clergyman nodded. John's heart beat happily. Thank the Lord! As between one Oxford man and another. . . . "What college were you at sir?" he went on, with a just too laborious casualness.

"Non-collegiate!" said the other stiffly.

It would have been more propitious, John realized, not to have asked the question. It does not ingratiate an Oxford man who was unattached to a special college, to have the information extracted from him.

"The fact is," said John, "I'm taking the Modern Literature Finals in a few days. My head's beastly muzzy and my tutors sent me packing for a day or two's tramp into Otmoor. My ruck-sack, you see, sir?"

"I see!" said the other, without warmth. "Well, assuming your story is true, what do you want of me? Why do you come disturbing me at this hour?"

"It's like this, sir," went on John hurriedly. He did not

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

like the tone in the man's voice. He did not care for the man at all. "It's too dreadfully funny! Ha! Ha! Ha!" he laughed. Again the laughter stopped dead on his lips. It was really a very mournful noise. He went on and explained the whole situation. He warmed to it as his story developed. The vicar stood like a statue, his foot grimly blocking the door. "And so you see, sir, the poor old lady thinks I'm a sort of Raffles, doing the Otmoor round with my rough-haired colleague. The chaps at Crispin's will be terribly tickled. It *is* a scream, sir, isn't it?" Perhaps the vicar imagined the question to be purely rhetorical. He made no reply. But it wasn't a rhetorical question. It was quite important for the vicar to think the affair *was* a scream. "Isn't it?" John repeated anxiously.

Once more the vicar disregarded the question. "I am very sorry," he said. "I still fail to see how the matter concerns me. The conduct of Mrs. Phelps of the Lion is no affair of mine. I will trouble you, if you have said all you wished to say——"

"Oh, but don't you see, sir? I'm absolutely lost! I haven't the faintest idea where I am! I know that it all looked fishy to the old lady. But if you'd be so kind as to come along with me and explain to her I'm all right, my troubles would be over. It's only natural, sir, that learning there was a vicar in the place. . . . I mean, sir, an educated man——"

"I'm afraid I don't know who you are. Your story may or may not be true. I wish you good-night, sir."

"But hang it all, do I sound like a crook? Do I look like one, with these pince-nez? I mean the way I speak, my clothes, my boots——"

"I fear it would be quite impossible to move Mrs. Phelps out of her bed. Quite impossible, quite!"

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

"I assure you, sir, I'll guarantee to do that! You see, if I smashed a window or two. . . You'd perhaps be so good as to hold a few pound notes to cover any damages——"

"I do not know who you are, sir, and I cannot associate myself with you in any such scheme!"

"But I'm telling you who I am. I'm just a wretched undergraduate at Crispin's. I'm Secretary of the College Beagles. I speak at the Union. I go to old Trampington's lectures at Merton on the Elizabethan Novel. I'm—— Really, sir, it's fantastic! You can't possibly think——"

"I do not know who you are, I cannot take the responsibility of imposing you upon Mrs. Phelps."

"Well, look here, sir——" A brilliant and oh, so forlorn idea flashed into John's mind. "I think you're quite right. If we *did* persuade the old lady to give me a bed, she'd be in a sweat all night long. Won't you just give me a shake-down for the night? I'd camp out willingly, but I've a filthy cold coming on. Any old sofa would do."

"I'm afraid I must ask you to go away at once."

"Is it possible? You really believe . . . after all I've told you . . . Oh, really, sir, be a sport! I've not convinced you I'm nothing but a benighted undergraduate?" Suddenly John let down his ruck-sack from his shoulders and opened it out feverishly. "Here's my blinking Beowulf! And my Anglo-Saxon Syntax! I just slipped them in to freshen up my memory if I felt up to it! Do you see? My name—— John Atwater, Crispin's College. Can you still doubt me? Is that the sort of stuff a professional crook carries about with him? As man to man——"

"There is no saying where you may have picked up those volumes. I cannot allow you to pass my door."

"But look here, for God's sake, look here!" he shouted shrilly. He fumbled in the outside pocket of the sack

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

and brought out his extra pair of glasses. "Look at these. Does a criminal go about with a second pair of glasses? Do you see? The lenses are thicker. They're my reading-glasses! You can't possibly stand up against these! But you can't! I'll crawl out quite early, as soon as it's light —"

"If you do not go away this instant——" said the vicar of Dunkerly Briggs. And with that the patience of John Atwater snapped. The torrent of his emotions burst their dam. He told the vicar of Dunkerly Briggs exactly what he thought of him. . . . A man, was he? He was twice the size of himself, John Atwater; yet there he stood, shivering and sniffing, with his foot in the door! A clergyman, was he? Did he remember the tale of Jean Val Jean and the silver candlesticks? An Oxford man, was he? Did he know the difference between an educated man and an old boot? "To hell with you, sir!" concluded John Atwater. He heard the wind of the door as it was banged to in his face. He turned round and walked two or three yards. Suddenly he felt his knees sagging and giving way under him, so drained was he of the last ounce of his strength. He would have pitched forward on to his face, if a great rough arm had not seized his shoulder and held him upright, and a voice had not whispered in his ear: "Never you mind, son, we'll see you right!"

Of what happened next, John Atwater had only the vaguest memory. It was quite as likely that the yellow-haired youth carried him back to the little tent as that he himself walked there.

What titan trees were these through which they moved? What profound gulfs they skirted! They reached the small camp after a lapse, it seemed to him, of nightmare hours. He heard a whispering over his head, steady and rhythmic as a river. Some fierce liquor was thrust between his lips.

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

One of the persons under the tent of sacking moved. He was deposited in the vacant place. In two moments he was dead asleep, tucked up like a small child against the warm body of the gipsy woman.

At noon the next day he learned that the girl Sal it was who had made way for him. He only wakened at noon. He learned also, and from Sal's lips, that the doubting vicar of Dunkerly Briggs had had another caller than John Atwater that night as it was.

Leastwise, if you could use the word "caller," which you could'nt, said Gypsy Sal. Her bosom heaved. Her black eyes flashed. It was clear she thought the Vicar of Dunkerly Briggs a lily-livered chicken, at best.

So she and Will had set forth for Dunkerly the very moment that John Atwater fell to snoring under the tent. And, as before, Will lingered on the green, over against the duck-pond. But she, for her part, went farther, so far as the front window of the Vicarage. And there she lay herself down on the damp grass and moaned. She moaned like a maiden who has been sorely set upon. And loud she moaned and low she moaned and loud again she moaned. Until at length there was the sound of a man approaching along a dark lobby, and of a bolt drawn and a chain loosened. And the Vicar of Dunkerly Briggs shuffled fearfully forward towards the moaning, in slippers and pyjamas and a dressing-gown. "What's wrong?" he inquired, bravely. "What's wrong?" But the girl was too far gone to be capable of any reply. And what else could a Christian gentleman do than carry into his own house a poor maiden so sorely smitten?

But the moaning became feebler and feebler; and afraid of what might be said, if a maiden died of exposure under his own front window and himself not lifting a finger to

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

help her, he raised her at length and carried her into his house; and laid her upon a sofa in his sitting-room, the sofa that she would not have occupied if John Atwater had occupied it.

And he propped a cushion under her head, and slowly she opened her eyes and rested them upon him. And, "What has happened, my poor girl?" he asked her. "Who was the scoundrel? What can I get for you?" But even as he spoke to her, a fearful nervousness fell upon him. For those lustrous black eyes and that rosy cheek with the dimple in it were the eyes and cheek of no maiden whom some blackguard has just left for dead. And with one of those same lustrous eyes she winked, and his face blanched like cheese and he stammered: "W-w-what's the meaning of this?"

And she said if he thought she was going to spend the night on that mangy sofa he was mistaken. And would he take her up at once to his bedroom, because she would like a nice fat bed to lie on.

Whereon he advanced towards her, as if to seize her like a sack of coke and drop her somewhere. And she said: "Do if you dare! I'll scream and I'll scream!"

So he said he was going out at once to call in the cottagers; that anything so monstrous had never been known in Dunkerly Briggs before, and if she did not clear out immediately . .

So she said if he did any such thing, she would tell them that it was all a quarrel about price; that he had promised her so much and he was trying to get away with half as much, now it was all over.

And suddenly the poor gentleman, called on to suffer so grievously, for his lack of faith in his fellow-creatures, unstiffened altogether, like a clothes' line from which a supporting pole has slipped.

THE VICAR OF DUNKERLY BRIGGS

"This way!" said the Vicar of Dunkerly Briggs. And he went up the stairs before Gypsy Sal and opened the door of his bedroom for her, and lit the gas.

"There!" he said, pointing to his bed. His lips were like bleached grass. But she was in no hurry. "And I too," she said, "would like some pyjamas." He brought some out for her from his chest of drawers. "Thank you!" she said. "I shall be frightened," she went on. "Bring up some cushions and make yourself comfortable outside my door."

She changed into her pyjamas. She thought them a great joke. She could hear her host laying down the cushions and beating at them as if he hated them and wanted to kill them. Then he stretched himself out on them.

"Good-night!" she called out sweetly. "I'm so comfortable! Are you?"

He did not reply to her. She could hear him groaning and stretching and kicking all night long.

Not that there was much of the night left. Dawn came not many hours later. She changed into her own clothes again, but she brought with her the cord of her pyjamas. She had not taken them without asking. She had asked him proper, but he was that tired with the night he'd had, what with one thing and another, that he didn't answer her at all nicely.

So she went off. She couldn't say for certain sure that no one had seen her leaving the Vicarage. And if they had, surely nobody could think ill of a good kind man that had helped a girl dying under his front window? "Could they, mister?" she asked John Atwater anxiously.

He looked away. It was better not to stare too bravely into those eyes which were like damson-plums.

Mexicano

Fugue: in two voices

I WENT to see Gregorio one day when I heard he was going blind. My grandfather had cataracts and I thought probably Gregorio had the same trouble. He did. He complained, however, not of cataracts, but of the evils besetting him and within him, wondering about his sins and going over them all like a miser counting his money. He'd burned five dollars' worth of candles in the church against his blindness, but his eyes grew worse instead of better and he was considering now the advisability of some heroic shriving, a penitential retreat or even a bodily penance. He knew well enough, as we all know, that some of his compatriots indulge in dark mysteries in Holy Week, but until his eyesight failed he hadn't put much faith or sympathy in that kind of thing.

He was sitting under the big apricot tree when I found him, reading ; the book, as usual, was Don Quixote.

"Well, Gregorio, how's the Don to-day?" I called him by his Christian name, though he was thrice my age ; everybody did, except his immediate family.

"Ah," he said in disgust, "I can no more see the Don. I see him here, yes," touching his forehead with his fingertip, "but no more here," touching his eyes.

MEXICANO

"You still read, though," I said.

"Yes, I see enough to read a little."

"You know, Gregorio, an eye doctor could fix you up without much trouble—if you don't delay too long."

Gregorio curled his lips scornfully. "Doctors—Protestants," he snorted, "bah! They're all the same."

I knew there was no use pressing it; I knew how it was with those old people. The doctor and the priest went together, last minute requisites.

(I went to see Gregorio one day when I heard he was going blind. That was my pretence, at least, to see what was the matter with his eyes and to tell him about my grandfather who had cataracts in both his eyes when he died. But Gregorio had a grand-daughter named Carmelita and she it really was I went to see, although she was married to a man who had once been a great friend of mine. Now, I thought, he was a little stupid, and hardly a fit mate for one as beauteous as Carmelita.)

So I said nothing more about the doctor, and after a few minutes he showed me the book he was reading and explained how he came by it. It was an ancient volume and bore the imprint of Seville. A certain ancestor of his—and he swelled with pride in telling this—brought the book from Spain around 1700 among some other heirlooms now in his, Gregorio's, possession. A few pieces of old silver bore a certain noble crest, and it was these which the old man withheld to the last in displaying his treasures. It proved, did it not, that nobility was in his blood as well as in the furrowed façade of his brow and face?

(I said no more about the doctor after my first suggestion aroused only scorn in Gregorio. Instead of talking, I just looked around the place for Carmelita, but couldn't see her anywhere, and the old man told me about the nobility of

MEXICANO

his ancestors. I'd known him, but particularly his grandchildren, always, and Carmelita had seemed the natural girl for me and I never gave anything else much thought until she suddenly married that friend of mine. It made me mad, and I made up my mind that I'd have her, anyway, but of course with a thing like that in my head I couldn't go on being very good friends with her husband.)

"How many times have you read Don Quixote, Gregorio?"

"I don't know." He chuckled. "Each time seems like the first time." Then he leaned close to me and grew confidential. "They think I'm a little crazy," he said, motioning towards the house where he lived with Carmelita and her lout of a husband. "They think I'm a little crazy because I read all the time, but it's all right for me to read, don't you think so? I can watch 'em just as well when I'm reading—better really, because they come out in the open and think I can't see them."

"Yes," I said, and sat down on my heels beside the old man's chair. "But I should think it would interrupt your reading too often. Don't you find that's true?"

"No. No, I don't mind it." Suddenly his face took on a sly look and he raised his book and pretended to read, peering around the edge of the pages furtively. I said nothing and watched, picking up pebbles and flicking them off with my thumb and forefinger. The sun was hot on my back. Gregorio's foot shot out in a quick kick at the empty air; he chuckled and put down his book again. "Almost got him that time," he said. "He was green—bright little green one!"

I nodded. They were always green, but he mentioned it each time as if the others had been different. "Don't they ever get to you, Gregorio?" I said.

MEXICANO

"No. Never have yet."

"What would happen, do you suppose, if they did?"

"Oh," said the old man, instantly serious and alarmed, "it would be bad—very bad. Maybe one of them did get by. I sometimes think that happened and that's why I don't see so good any more."

"It's possible," I said.

"Yes, it's possible. And you talk about doctors. What do they know about such things?"

We sat quietly for a long time; I had nothing to do because it was Sunday and I worked in town at a store.

(So after that I said no more about the doctor. I had an idea that Carmelita was weakening. She had always liked me, I knew that, and her affair with this other man was too quick to be true. It was an emotional action, or reaction, or something. I wasted time by going to the college in Santa Fé for three years, and lost out. She had one baby already, so she knew what it was like, and she might as well have another one. Her husband would think he fathered it, no matter what happened; he was one of those humble men who is above suspicion or jealousy.)

Falling into a day-dream, I was started out of it by another of Gregorio's vicious kicks into the air. "Almost got him that time!" he said. "He was green—a bright little green one!"

At last, as it came time for the noon meal, I thought I'd better go, so I stood up and said good-bye to Gregorio. At the same moment, however, Carmelita came out of the house and asked me to stay to lunch. I made some indefinite excuse which she didn't even listen to, and as she turned back into the house she beckoned me to follow her. She was waiting for me inside the door, but I was disappointed to find her frowning instead of smiling.

MEXICANO

"Well, what do you think of him?" she said.

"Your grandfather? He seems about the same."

"No, I mean his eyes. Are they bad?"

"Yes, very bad. He'll go blind entirely unless something's done about them."

Carmelita looked worried. She was about my own age and pretty, and for the life of me I couldn't look at her eyes and her full blouse without imagining ourselves in bed together. It wasn't that I was especially lustful or lascivious, but some women are that way, that's all. She was talking again and I dragged my mind away from the other thing.

"Would it cost much to get a doctor out here to see him?" she said. "I can't make him go to see one himself."

"Not very much. Four or five dollars, maybe."

"Oh, dear," she said.

"What does he say?"

"Oh, you know what he says. Doctors are fools—no use. He wants to see old senora Apodaca, up on the hill. I talked to her about it, and she wants twenty-five dollars to fix him up."

"She'll fix him up, all right," I said. "She'll finish him up."

"Oh, I don't know." Carmelita looked mysterious. "She's done wonderful things."

"Wonderful things can be done sometimes, but your grandfather has a cataract in his eye. Only an operation can fix that."

"How do you know so much?" she said.

"Well, my grandfather had one—a doctor fixed his eyes. You don't really believe in that woman yourself, do you?"

"Well, maybe. She's done wonderful things."

We began to stand around self-consciously. I hoped

MEXICANO

she was beginning to notice me as I always noticed her.

"Nice new car you've got there," she said.

"Like it? I bought it last week." I tried to pretend that buying a car was nothing for me. "It's pretty good."

"You know," she said, veering off, "I wonder what he thinks those little green things are? What would happen if he missed one and it got by him?"

"Why, nothing. How could there be anything? He sees them only in his head."

"I'm not so sure about that," she said. "I think maybe there *is* something there that we can't see. I think maybe they're the cause of his trouble."

"Carmelita, how can you be so foolish? He's just a little crazy."

"I know, that's what we've always said, but lately I've been thinking that he may not be as crazy as we think. Maybe we're the crazy ones."

I went out and sat on the doorstep in the sun. "You country people are funny," I said, and she set some things on the table for lunch.

(Carmelita came out of the house and asked me to stay to lunch. I think she'd been watching me all the time to be sure I didn't escape; that's the way it seemed to me, anyway. Perhaps I imagined it; when a man wants something badly, he'll interpret the signs favourably when he can, and sometimes when he can't. She talked to me like a friend—too good a friend. Once a relationship like ours gets established on a basis of friendship, it's next to impossible to bring off the other thing. So I wasn't too friendly with her. I called her a fool, not in so many words, and made slurring remarks about the country people. She didn't seem to notice it, though; she was too worried about

MEXICANO

her old grandfather, who was going blind and was already a little mad ; mildly, pleasantly mad, however.)

Carmelita's husband drove up pretty soon in an old battered car that made mine look brighter than ever. There wasn't much intelligence in his face, I thought ; he wasn't more than twenty. We sat around for a while. The old man was reading. Then Carmelita's next youngest brother came up and said hello and sat down on his heels nearby and said nothing. Nobody said anything ; the lunch simmered on the stove inside. We just sat and watched the old man reading, and when he kicked at one of his green imps, or whatever they were, we looked at one another and smiled. Presently more members of the family arrived, and I realised that I had stumbled into a family council of some kind. I remembered that I was really one of the family, or I would have left before anything happened. All but one of Gregorio's sons and daughters were there, and the oldest of them looked as old as the old man himself.

One of them went into the house and came out with Carmelita ; she went with them unwillingly as the meeting adjourned to a spot under a big cottonwood tree, beyond the hearing of Gregorio. I went along, too, on the edge of the crowd, wondering what it was all about, and curious, more than anything else. It was, as I might have guessed, about the old man ; the family seemed to be divided between old senora Apodaca and one of the doctors in town. I was a little disgusted that there should be any division of opinion in such a business, but I kept quiet until one of them asked me what I thought.

"Nobody takes that old Apodaca woman seriously any more," I said. "She's nothing but a witch and a faker. A doctor could operate on his eye and have it fixed in no time."

MEXICANO

But there were complaints about the cost of an operation from those in favour of the doctor, and from the rest nothing but angry looks.

"You'd pay as much to that Apodaca woman before you get through," I said, and then kept my mouth shut. It was not what they wanted to hear, evidently, and I was politely closed out of the conversation after that. I don't know what they asked me for in the first place; I was younger than most of them. Perhaps it was because I lived in town and knew something about the ways of city people.

(When Carmelita came out of the house the second time she looked very splendid and angry. As she stood at the door, drenched in sunlight, her eyes roved along the crowd and came to rest against mine. A flash of understanding travelled along the beam of our joined gaze, like an electric current, and she calmed down right away and came over to to my side and walked with me at the edge of the crowd as it moved away from Gregorio. She stayed with me all the time, although her husband was right there; somewhere between us there was a bond. I had known her much longer than her husband had; he came to the valley only a year before they were married from the Colorado mines, he said, but I never believed that tale. He had the Indian look of a peon from old Mexico, but of course he couldn't admit that, or our people would have thrown him out. Carmelita's baby looked more like a papoose, too, than a Christian, Spanish child.)

I continued to be interested while the argument grew hot; most of the talking was done by the older members of the family. Their principal concern was that Gregorio, as the patriarch and head of the family, was entitled to every consideration and respect, which was true enough; the heads of our families are tyrants and their command is absolute.

MEXICANO

But where that command is unbalanced, a problem is presented and they were having trouble with it. I finally sat down under a tree and waited for something to happen. It looked as though something would happen, for some of them were getting excited.

(I said nothing more about a doctor after my first attempt. I didn't care so much any more, either ; the hopeless superstitions of these country people made me sorry for them, but there was nothing I could do. And Carmelita came out of the house and looked at me and I looked at her and both of us saw something in the other which had been there all the time and which neither of us understood very well ; and now she sat with me under a cottonwood, but separated from me by a discrepancy of sympathy, for she drank in the argument and I began to hate it.)

At last somebody suggested getting the Apodaca woman down there for a consultation, and one of the men scurried over to where his car was parked and hurried away, bouncing over the rutted road like a jack-rabbit. The others waited in silence under the cottonwoods. In a few minutes the man returned, and we could see the woman in the front seat with him, hanging on for her life against the crazy lurching of the little car. It was some time before she could get out when they stopped in the midst of us, she was so jolted. She was a shrivelled old thing with a pointed, hairy chin and warts on her hands and wens on her face. People said she was wise, but she looked merely crafty to me. The family members were polite to her, and respectful as people are respectful to rattlesnakes ; her skin was the colour and texture of an old potato.

I was disgusted, but waited to hear what they would say. When Senora Apodaca was able to get out of the car she marched over to a tree near mine and sat down

MEXICANO

importantly, arranging her skirts like a queen. They all gathered round her in a half-circle, and one of the older men, selecting himself spokesman, began.

"Senora Apodaca," he said, "our father, as you know, is going blind. He's been a little crazy, too, for a long time and thinks that little devils are trying to get him. Do you think they *are* devils, or—something else?"

The old woman managed to look wise; she rubbed her chin and squinted her eyes. "It seems to me," she said pompously, "the trouble is there, all right. I could do something about the devils, and the rest would take care of itself."

"What would you do?" the spokesman asked.

She hurled a look at him, without saying anything, that put him in his place instantly. He retired into silence.

(Carmelita followed every incident keenly and with uncertain partisanship. I forgot everything but Carmelita presently. I felt ourselves coming together—I knew, when she came and sat down beside me under the cottonwood, that somewhere that day we should meet as I wanted us to meet, in spite of our disagreement about Gregorio and the witch-woman. She was melting inside, and flowing like quicksilver, ready to be caught and confined in my way. I melted, too, but only physically, and I held on to the advantage I had won.)

The conference threatened to collapse for a while, until senora Apodaca pivoted herself and faced Gregorio, and watched him intently until she saw him kick once at his imps, whereupon she nodded understandingly and waddled to his side. We watched from the cottonwood grove and saw Gregorio point to his eyes and then with a sweeping gesture indicate the imps which surrounded him. I wanted to hear what was being said, so I wandered away, and by

MEXICANO

degrees near enough to hear the talk between them. He was telling her about the imps and suddenly stiffened, saying : " There's one now ! See him ? He's green—a bright little green one ! "

She looked along the direction of his outstretched arm and nodded as if she saw him, too. Then with a marvellously quick jump for an old woman she leapt at the spot and returned to Gregorio with her fist closed around the imaginary object. They both examined it minutely, and laughed and chuckled as it wriggled and tried to get away. I was close enough to see that there was absolutely nothing in her hand, but they laughed and laughed at it, wriggling there. When they finished with it, she tossed the thing away like one of the corn-husk cigarettes she was constantly smoking.

I was so interested that I didn't notice Carmelita until she was beside me and touched me on the shoulder. " I want to go into the house," she said. " Everything will be burning. Do you think it would be all right ? "

Senora Apodaca was examining Gregorio's eyes, bending over him.

" I don't see why not," I said to Carmelita. " I'll go in with you if you like."

" Yes," she said, " come with me."

By making a wide circle we avoided the two we had been watching and made the house door and went in. Carmelita hurried to the stove and re-arranged some steaming kettles there ; I sat down and watched her from a position where I could also see the witch and her patient, through the door. I saw her pull Gregorio out of his chair and start towards the house.

" They're coming here, Carmelita. I suppose she wouldn't like us to be here, too ? "

MEXICANO

"No, I suppose not," she said. "But we can't get out now without being seen. We could hide——" she looked quickly around the room, "——we could hide in there," she said, indicating an alcove without a door, but separated from the room by a curtain.

"Yes," I said, "if we must hide, that would be the place all right. She can't do any more than ask us to leave."

"Come on," Carmelita said, vanishing behind the curtain, I followed her.

(I knew it! I knew it would come when she looked at me with her wide-staring eyes flashing in the sun! When she walked with me to the cottonwoods, when she followed me as I wandered away from the crowd in the grove, when we entered the house together, when we hid in the alcove, I knew it! She was molten now; I was molten. She kept a frail interest in her grandfather even then, peering through the curtain, but a thought could destroy it, the slightest force, small as the beat of a bee's wing, could remind her of me, standing there, molten, beside her!)

Senora Apodaca entered the house with Gregorio. She sat him down in a chair and surveyed the room, making hissing sounds through her toothless gums at every breath. My arm was around Carmelita's waist, but I was curious, too, and I saw the old woman go to the stove and brew a tea out of some herbs. One thing after another went into the pot, and she seemed to be making queer passes over it as it began to boil, but I couldn't be sure of that because my view of the stove wasn't clear. Carmelita whispered that if I didn't make my hand behave she'd scream and spoil the whole show. I knew she wouldn't scream, but I don't know how I knew. She didn't.

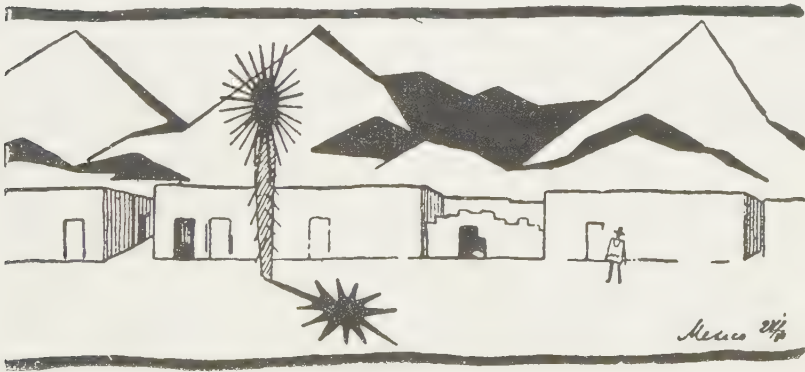
(All the years of knowing each other, all the day's cumulative, small steps towards the fulfillment we both desired

MEXICANO

engulfed Carmelita in the alcove and she began to be of me. She forgot to scream, she forgot Gregorio and the witch-woman, she forgot time and life and eternity and the day and the mysterious silences in the other room, but)

A strange sound, so arresting that it injected death into the midst of passionate life, brought us to the curtain in a single movement. The Apodaca woman was gone ; Gregorio was falling from his chair and before we could reach him, slumped to the floor. Carmelita, seeing the bandage over his eyes, the blood smeared on his face, fainted. I made her as comfortable as I could and without waiting for anything else, carried the old man out to my car and drove to town to a doctor.

He was outraged, the doctor was ; he cursed the damned stupidity of the native people, and when I told him about the Apodaca woman, he raged like a crazy man. For she had tried the cataract operation herself. Of course, the old man died pretty soon. The doctor said I should have come in and got him before the thing happened (but it was Carmelita I was interested in, more than Gregorio or his blindness or the terrible deeds of a witch-woman.)



The burial race

I^NDEED I remember that I promised to tell you the story of Jeanie Bán and her sister Mary, although it was only the other day I promised ; for old people remember best what happened sixty or seventy years ago, and forget yesterday. Still, I have not forgotten my promise, and this is a good afternoon for keeping it. Pull your chair closer to the fire—much closer. Here, Darroch, come out of that. You are a bad dog, to be losing your manners. Now, there is room. Have you spread your coats where they will drip and dry ? That is right. Now we can be comfortable together.

I was saying that the old remember long bygone things the best. Well, it is over seventy years since my brother up the brae and myself saw our young brother and sisters for the last time in our house at Ardnacrannach. That was where we lived then, down on the headland, close to the stone pier. There were five of us then, and for more than seventy years there have only been myself and my brother up the brae, and I have never since lived at Ardnacrannach ; and before I can tell you about Jeanie Bán, I must first tell you of the disaster that came upon our family.

My father's brother was a gamekeeper some five miles down the loch side, and we children used often to go over

THE BURIAL RACE

and spend a day or two at his home. One time, when my brother and I had been there two or three days, on our return to Ardnacrannach we found our two younger sisters greatly excited, with stories of a strange visitor they had had the night before. It was a man who had come to get the boat over to the island. He had missed the boat, and, as he had nowhere to go, my mother and father let him stay the night. He was sick, and had spots on his face, and his head was tied up in a handkerchief. He said that he thought it was eating limpets and mussels that had made him sick. He stayed the night in our cottage. It was small, and we all slept in the one big room. The next day, though he was very sick, and his head ached badly, he caught the boat and went over to the island. We thought no more about him till, a few days later, word was brought back from the island that the man had died, and that it was the smallpox he had. My father and mother were in great consternation, as you may imagine. We had no doctor here in those times, except that every three weeks, or once a month, a young doctor used to come around on the boat and see to anything that was necessary; so, for want of a doctor, my parents asked the priest what was best to do. He said it would be best to send my brother and myself away out of danger, so we were sent over here to a cousin of my father's. I remember, as if it was yesterday, turning round in the track, and waving good-bye to my little sisters at the gate. They caught the sickness, and we never saw them again.

Well, well, that is not what you have come to hear about. I only tell it because it was through that happening that I ever saw Jeanie Bán. She lived here, in the house at the end of the track. You would not have called her Jeanie Bán by the time I saw her, for she was seventy years old and

THE BURIAL RACE

more. Bán? Bán means white—White Jeanie. When I saw her, she was the colour of old wood, tough and wrinkled. She was standing on the path here above the house, leaning on a stick and calling for her dog in a strong, angry voice. An extraordinary woman she was, and with all her strength and obstinacy and courage it is a queer thing to me to think that I have outlived her and come to be a much older woman. Still, I have had a quiet life, and no one certainly could say that of her.

Jeanie had a twin sister, named Mary. The two were nothing alike to look at, and, what was strange for twins, they were never good friends, but always rivals in everything. Mary was a woman of strong character, too, a dour and determined woman, but from childhood Jeanie had always got the better of her. They were both out-of-the-ordinary girls. They were strong, active, daring, and very good-looking, and anyone would have thought that Mary was a wonder if there had been no Jeanie always to go one better. Well known in the neighbourhood though they were, and fine girls both, they were slow to marry. Neither seemed to have any special boy of her own. They went everywhere, they did everything, they could row a boat and ride a horse like any man, but they stayed unmarried.

Then came the thing which gave Jeanie more than a local fame, and put her in the ascendant above Mary for always. It was in the time of the French Wars, and Napoleon was pressing very hard upon England. The father of the two girls, when he was one time down in the town, got into some kind of a muddle—I never heard the rights of it. Some said it was the press gang, some said it was the fruits of a bet, some said he was drunk and didn't rightly know what he was doing. Anyway, however it came about, he went for a soldier. Jeanie was devoted to her father, and, as soon

THE BURIAL RACE

as she heard what had happened, she vowed she would go too. You will hardly believe me when I tell you, but it is plain history that that girl, and she just in her twenties, found means to cross the sea to Flanders and follow the army in which her father fought, and go through the very battle of Waterloo itself. She followed, very different from most of the other women that followed the army, tending the wounded and giving them water, and doing any sort of job she could. How she lived, I cannot tell you. She was away from the place nearly two years, and then she came back, older and harder, but with her good looks as fine, and an experience of bloodshed and of strange deeds that put Mary in the shade for ever.

Meantime, Mary had not been idle. Whether it was the removal of her sister or not, I cannot say ; but, whatever way it came about, she had found a man for herself. MacNeill, his name was, Donald MacNeill ; and it was understood that, as soon as he could better himself, they were to be wed. Well, when Jeanie came home, she was the heroine of the countryside, as you may well imagine, and she turned the eyes of Donald MacNeill right away from Mary to herself. I do not think she meant to do it, for she would never have stood to injure her sister at any time, and what would she, a girl who had seen the very pick of men, want with a good-for-nothing off a farm, with nothing but a deep voice and a smooth tongue to recommend him ? Maybe she was bored with the quiet of the place, after the stirring times she had been through : maybe Mary annoyed her in some way. The man transferred his allegiance, that is all that matters, and after keeping him hanging about for nearly a year, with Mary gnashing her teeth beside her, Jeanie married him.

The marriage turned out badly, as it deserved to. The

THE BURIAL RACE

man was no good. Jeanie was too masterful for him : she wore the breeches altogether, and as soon as he found out that he could do nothing with her, he took to drink. When he was in drink he managed to knock her about once or twice, for he was a big strong man ; but that did him no good. Then he got mixed up with the excise men, and spent some months in prison. By the time he came back, Jeanie had decided he was no more use to her or to her little boy, who was just beginning to be old enough to realise that all was not well between his mother and his father. The night after he came home he got very drunk, knocked Jeanie down, and hurt the child. Presently he went to sleep. He never woke. Like Jael in the Bible, Jeanie killed him while he slept. She went outside the house, her mouth still bleeding where he had knocked out one of her teeth, filled a pillow-case with stones, and battered in his head while he was sleeping.

She made no attempt to conceal the deed. She pointed to her own wounds and the wounds on the child, and said it was his life or theirs. The man was no good to her, nor to anyone else, and the neighbours soon decided she was right to do as she did. It was long ago, over a hundred years, and the country was very wild then : a deed like Jeanie's did not rouse the stir it would nowadays. If anything, it told the other way, and she obtained a great name for her courage and daring.

Whatever the rest of the neighbourhood thought, however, there was one person who never forgave her. That was Mary. Jeanie had taken away her man, and, though he turned out to be no good, Mary was always able to say to herself that if he had married her, things would have been different. She would have understood him. She would have made a man of him, treated him tenderly as a wife,

THE BURIAL RACE

and not have driven him to drink and destruction by her unnatural hardness and usurpation of the place a man ought to have in the home. The two sisters were at enmity henceforward, and their rivalry more bitter than ever. Jeanie married again, a bare two years afterwards, and once more she seemed to have the laugh over Mary; but at the full age of thirty-one Mary did something to right the balance by making a very good marriage with a man of property, a Mr. Macmillan, who had bought one of the biggest houses in Ardnacrannach. There, for the rest of her life, Mary stayed, soon learning the ways of a grand lady, softening her speech and bettering her dress, getting her goods by boat from the town; able to crow over Jeanie, whose husband was only a fisherman with a couple of fields at the back of the cottage. But Jeanie did not care. The great hardness of her spirit rose above a mere difference in station, and the strength of her personality was so great that when her sister drove by her on the road, and they exchanged a few words of greeting, it was Jeanie, with her old clothes and her hard voice, who seemed to have come off best in the world. No one could patronise Jeanie, and the only time Mary did not look to be a grand lady (for she grew to have a fine dignity and bearing) was when her sister was by. So the two lived on, in their different stations, a bare five miles apart, and the years brought little change to them. Jeanie's husband died, but she throve, making a hard and independent living with her children. Mary's husband died, and she lived on in her grand house, alone and childless, doing good works about the countryside, and making charitable use of her wealth. She was worth far more to the community in every way than Jeanie was, save in the matter of kindling affection and gladdening people's hearts: for Jeanie, with her rough wit and her ready tongue, and the hair-raising,

THE BURIAL RACE

blood-curdling stories she could tell of the wars in Flanders, was a popular favourite, respected and loved, while Mistress Macmillan, kind but severe, was respected only.

My brother and I saw little enough of Jeanie, but we had a great veneration and fear for her, both on account of her reputation, and on account of the queer rough masculine way she had of speaking. She would be kindly enough, when she met us in the fields or on the road, and ask how we did ; but we were too much in awe of her to do more than answer civilly. Then my brother was taken as assistant to a gamekeeper on the other side of the river, and I stayed on with my cousin to help his wife. Jeanie's house was not more than a quarter of a mile from ours, but, even so, I did not see her very often, except in the distance. The chief memory I have of her is the sound of her voice on the hillside, calling for her dog. He was a young dog, and he was always running away from her, and she, now that she was getting old, would be anxious for him. It was the one sign of age about her, apart from her looks, that she should be always calling and scolding the dog, for fear something would happen to him.

Well, not to weary you with little details which will mean nothing to you in these times, the day came that brought Jeanie to the last and strangest act of her career. I had been down to the beach to get some mussels, and as I was coming back I saw a little crowd of people carrying something up the slope of the hill. It was Jeanie. She had been down with her dog by the burn, and she had slipped and broken her leg. She cursed like a man all the time they were carrying her up to the house, except twice when she fainted away, and she lay in bed cursing. By great good fortune, there was a doctor staying at Sir George Macalister's house, and he drove over to see what could be done. It was high up her leg was broken,

THE BURIAL RACE

and he set it for her as best he could, but he warned her sons that at her age she would not be likely to get over it. The lying down, he said, would be a burden to her lungs. Whether Jeanie wormed that out of them I do not know, but she seemed to have a very good idea of her danger. "I will not go before her," she kept saying furiously ; "her " meaning Mary. "I will not go before her and have to be watching the graveyard against her coming."

What she meant by that I must explain to you. There was a superstition in these parts for many years that the last comer into the village churchyard had to keep watch over all the corpses there till the next person was buried. Every person who died hoped they would have to keep a short watch only. It irked Jeanie to die before her sister, and it irked her still more to think of having to keep a watch, maybe for years, till Mary came. Now that old Angus the shepherd was dead, they were the two oldest people in the neighbourhood, and there was no one else that looked at all likely for death, unless it was a girl with a weak chest on the far side of Ardnacrannach ; but she was getting better and stronger, so it was said, and it looked like a duel between the two old ladies, with a fair field and no favour.

Jeanie held out for a week, fighting hard for her life, but it became clear to all that she was weakening, and the trouble came with her lungs, of which the doctor had spoken. Then, if you will believe what I am saying, there came a message that Mary had been stricken mortally ill. As she was getting out of bed that morning, she fell on the floor, and when they came in and picked her up, her face was twisted and there was no movement in one side of her body at all. It sounds a horrible thing to tell you, but the news put fresh life into Jeanie.

"She will not outlast me," she said, "by more than a day,

THE BURIAL RACE

or two days at the most. She may go before me. I do not mind keeping watch for a day or two days, or even a week, now that I know she'll have the long watch after me."

It was not a Christian way to be speaking, but Jeanie was a law to herself. As a matter of fact, she did not last many hours after that news. It was as if the iron spirit that had held her up was no longer needed. She had all the neighbours called in to bid her goodbye. I came, too, very unwillingly, but she looked near enough to her own self, not like a person that is dying at all. The only queer thing about her was her breath, which was so loud you could hear it outside. Her voice was hoarse and husky as she bade me goodbye, but there was strength in it.

"Goodbye, little girl," she said. "Marry well, and don't live tame."

Queer advice! I wonder if she would think I had followed it? Ah well: she died that same night.

There were great preparations for waking her, for it was felt that the death of so notable a character called for some special show. The ceremony was fixed for the second night after she died, and on the morning of that day the news came that Mary had died too, in her big grand house, stiff and twisted, not able to say a word to a soul from the time she was struck, or do anything but roll one eye round in her head. She had no pain, as Jeanie had, but if I had to choose one way or the other, I'd sooner have Jeanie's end of the two.

I remember the evening of the wake as if it had been last week: indeed, I shall never forget it. It was in the middle of September. Heavy rain had been falling all day, but by the time we started to walk up to the house at the point—the same house that is there now, but for a new roof and a sheet of corrugated iron against the south-west gales—the

THE BURIAL RACE

clouds had broken and a full moon was shining. The burn was flooded with the rains, and it was the time of the September spring tides, so that it looked to us as though the whole little valley was full of water. When the spring tides flowed, in March and September, Jeanie's sons rowed round up the burn below the house, and moored their boat there for the night. At ordinary tides, there would not be water enough. They always made a ceremony of rowing round, and now their mother was dead it had not occurred to them to stop it, so the boat was there below us as we went up the path, moored against the grass. The sea was making no more than a whisper on the beach outside.

It was a great wake. Jeanie lay on a table, the candles round her open coffin, her face looking proud as an eagle's in the soft light. Many tales of her were told round the fire, there was fine piping, and a young man with a grand voice to sing a lament and the death song of her clan. There was plenty to drink too, and the evening was working up to be an evening of the kind she loved, when men's hearts were kindled and their tongues loosened as they thought of bravery and fierce deeds, when suddenly there came a splashing of boots in the mud outside and a hammering on the door. The door was opened, and a boy staggered in, out of breath and destroyed with haste.

"Mistress Macmillan," he gasped out. "They are burying her this night. They are rushing her to the graveyard, to be the first."

There was a moment of silence, while everyone sat back, trying to take in this unheard of thing. Then all the voices burst out in a roar at once. Allan, Jeanie's eldest son, stared at the messenger, his red face blotched with surprise. I was close beside him, in the corner, and I remember I stared at him, as everyone else did, to see what was to be done.

THE BURIAL RACE

After a minute, he held up his hand to quiet the room. He leaned forward, and began to ask more questions of the messenger. The boy wanted his breath so badly that he could hardly get out a straight tale, but he told us that Mistress Macmillan had willed a large gift of money to the men of her estate if, supposing, as often happens to twins, the two died near together, they would see to it that she was buried before her sister.

As soon as he had taken it in properly, Allan sat back again in his chair, his big hands on his knees.

"The cunning schemer," he exclaimed. Then, starting up, "The old devil!"

There was another rush of voices, all offering advice, and then in a minute Allan, controlling himself, was giving directions. They were to take Jeanie down at once to the boat, and row her round to Port Ellen, a little bay with a farm at the back of it: a messenger was to go down to the farm close by, borrow a horse, and ride on to Port Ellen and warn the farmer to have a cart in readiness.

"But, power of Heaven," cried a man in the room, "We can't take her down as she is. The lid is not on the coffin yet."

"We have no time for that now. Nail it on in the boat," cried Allan; and in a minute they were carrying out the coffin from the inner room. A neighbour picked up the lid, and when Allan called for a hammer and nails I saw my chance and took them. All was in such a hurry that no one thought to stop me. I picked up a big shawl, wrapped it round me, and hurried down to the boat with the hammer, and the nails twisted in my kerchief. I was in the boat, safely tucked away in the bows, when they brought Jeanie down. The path was steep, and the grass slippery after the rain. Down she came, carried high on their shoulders, the

THE BURIAL RACE

moon shining green on her dead face, jolting and twisting as the men slipped and slithered under the burden. They got her safely down, but the coffin was too long, and it had to be laid across the thwarts in the stern, Jeanie's head over the water on one side, and her feet on the other. A curse or two, a jerk of the oars, and we were off. As soon as we were out on the open sea, the tide running full and still, one of the men kneeled up in the stern, and began fumbling to put the lid on the coffin.

I should never forget that row if I lived to be a thousand. The moon was flooding down as full as the tide. The shore lay white and shining, a silver mist was rising like smoke from the woods, and the mountains seemed secret and far away. Out to sea, heavy clouds lay over the islands, soft and fleecy, clouds you might see in a dream, full of dark shadows where the moonlight could not reach them. Everything was still except our boat, which was a little noisy world of its own, with men who grunted as they pulled, rowlocks that echoed along the shore, and soon the sound of a hammer knocking in the nails and making the sea birds stir and whimper in their sleep.

The sea was so calm that we made great speed. Once we were clear of the bay, the water grew phosphorescent. Each stroke of the oars wakened a hundred little dancing jewels of light, which joined and were lost in the broken moonlight in our wake. All was so peaceful and still, it seemed impossible we should be bound on such a queer errand.

I cannot say how long we were getting to Port Ellen ; three parts of an hour maybe, for the men rowed fast. I had fallen into a kind of trance, what with the fresh air after the crowded room, the regular sound of the oars, and the phosphorescence gleaming on the water. I was roused to realise that we were almost there by hearing an exclamation

THE BURIAL RACE

from the man in the stern. He had finished putting the lid on the coffin, and was sitting sideways, leaning one arm on it to hold it steady. As he spoke he pointed to the shore, and Allan screwed round at his oar to look. I turned too. In the moonlight we could see a figure standing rather disconsolately upon the white sand of the little bay, making gestures to us with his arm. He called out something, but we could not hear it for the sound of the oars.

"Easy," cried Allan impatiently, and turned round again to hear. The boat lost way, the rippling ceased under the bow, and we heard our messenger's voice clear across the still water.

"You must go on," he said. "The cart here is no good. They have sawed through one of the axles."

"They?" cried Allan. "Who?"

The boy on the shore began to speak fast. We understood him to say that he must have been watched setting off with the news, and that Mistress Macmillan's party, guessing that we might try to bring Jeanie in at once, had taken the precaution of disabling the one vehicle we might have found for her.

For a minute there was consternation in the boat. All looked dumbly at Allan, with faces pale and enquiring in the moonlight. The man in the stern leaned forward and muttered something. Allan scowled furiously. If he had not the oar in his hand, I think he would have struck the man.

"What?" he shouted. "You dare suggest that I should put my mother's body——"

His voice choked in his throat, and the man in the stern shrank back over the coffin from his wrath.

"But what else is there?" he cried. "How else will you get her there in time?"

THE BURIAL RACE

Allan sat for a moment considering. Then his face cleared up. "You are right," he cried. "It is our only hope."

He shouted directions to the boy on shore. With a jerk that brought my chin forward on my knees—I was sitting on a coil of rope in the bows—the oars dug into the water and the boat set off again. What we were going to do was almost a sacrilege, but it was the only thing if we wanted to get Jeanie into the graveyard before her sister. We were rowing on another mile to Ardnacardoch, a tiny inlet with a house at the head of it, where there was another cart. And such a cart! The man who lived in the house was the knacker of the neighbourhood, and the cart that finally brought Jeanie Bán's body to the graveyard was the knacker's cart, that never carried anything but dead horses! That was a terrible thing! For anybody else to be so carried would have been a disgrace, and a thing to be remembered for generations, but the occasion was one which allowed of any means.

We were in time at the churchyard, and just in time. The other party was there, with Mistress Macmillan's coffin, standing by the open grave. Jeanie's grave was ready too, for it had been dug that afternoon, and the two mounds of earth stood side by side. When the Macmillan party saw us, they were thunder-struck with astonishment, and shrank back into themselves. Well they might indeed, for Allan was a big and powerful man, and he was in such a rage at their trickery and cunning that he took his shoulder from under the side of his mother's coffin, nearly letting it fall, and rushed forward, shaking his fist and cursing them. What would have happened I do not like to think, only at that moment a white-robed figure came striding down the path to the two groups. It was Father Gallagher, come to commit Mary's body to the earth.

Then followed a scene, the like of which no one ever saw

THE BURIAL RACE

before. Both parties ran to the priest and began shouting at him, each urging that he should bury their corpse first. If he said anything, you could not hear it, for each side was so much concerned to shout the other down that it would have taken the full bellow of a bull, or a brace of bulls, to carry over the din. The priest's face turned dark in the moonlight, his eyes flashed, and his cheeks puffed out with the rage. Finally, a man of the Macmillan party actually seized him by the arm and made to drag him towards the grave. That settled it. Father Gallagher up with his fist and gave him a back-hander across the mouth that knocked him staggering. He tripped against the edge of the grave and sat down hard upon the grass.

"What d'ye mean, ye sacrilegious blackguard!" roared the priest. "How dare ye lay your hands on an anointed priest of God? What's come to ye all?" he went on, turning and facing the crowd of us. "Is it mad ye all are? Of all the unseemly, disgusting, irreverent, heathen, sacrilegious, blasphemous, and uproarious scenes that have ever taken place on holy ground, this is the worst. Faith, ye might all be atheists, or agnostics, or Lutherans, or black savages that had never heard of Christian behaviour!"

He was a grand figure, standing there in the middle of the path in his robes, scolding and blackguarding the group of us. Wonderful things he found for his tongue. It was the most terrifying sermon ever I wish to hear, and by the time he'd been speaking for five minutes the spirit had gone out of us all. We stood there sheepish, hanging our heads, and avoiding one another's eyes.

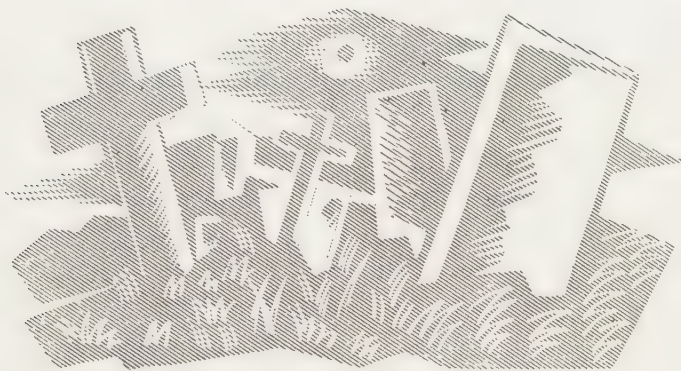
"Now I tell you what I'll do," said Father Gallagher at last. "There's been a deal too much of this unseemly bargaining and wrangling in the parish, for a long time past. These two departed women were as much to blame for it

THE BURIAL RACE

as anyone else, and I'm going to make a lasting peace between them, and between those who followed them, from now till the Day of Judgment. Holy Church can give no countenance to feuds and rivalries and superstitions. Into the ground together they shall go, side by side, and at the same time ; and I will read the one service over the two of them."

So that was the way out of it. Side by side and at the same time Jeanie and Mary went into the earth, and, if any watch was kept in the churchyard till the next soul came, the two of them kept it together.

Well, that happened a long time ago, and you would not see the like of Jeanie in the country nowadays. I was a little girl then, and here I am now an old woman, older than Jeanie was, or than Mary was. A whole generation of people has passed away since that time. It is a different world from the wild world we had then. Ah well, we are old, my brother and I : we are old, and these things are only a dream to us now.



After the ball

*Which, if in Hell no other pains there were,
Makes me fear Hell, because he must be there.*

DR. JOHN DONNE.

WHEN Mr. Wilfrid Dickinson put his hand down under the bed, to retrieve his fallen handkerchief, it was at once seized by another hand, hairy and hard as iron, but, even as the nervous gentleman's mild blood stood prickling in his veins, it was pressed, with unmistakable reverence and amity, to a pair of bristly lips.

"Oh!" thought Mr. Dickinson, and, withdrawing his hand, he sat bolt upright, tense in every nerve, in the very middle of his bed.

"Who's there?" he cried.

"Only me," said the fiend, who still crouched submissively below.

"Come out of that," said Mr. Dickinson at last, for he was greatly re-assured by the meek and piping tone of this answer. The fiend bumped and scuffled out, and stood sheepishly on the hearth rug.

What an oaf! His voice had belied him. He was much the size and shape of the largest gorilla, and his hulking body was covered with a short, napless fur, like that of a nasty toy, cheap and gingerish. This fur showed through the gaps in his costume, which was infinitely too small for

AFTER THE BALL

him, for he had stolen it, on his way here, from a little curate half his size, the better to commend himself to Mr. Dickinson, who abhorred the nude.

A word as to the natures of these two, thus dramatically met at midnight in the first floor front-bedroom of 10, Boskyn Road, N.14.

Dickinson, a bachelor in the best sense of that much abused term, had led a stainless life. Surrounded by luxury, for he was a cashier in one of our largest stores, he had never allowed luxury to lead him astray. His stamps tallied; his books, best nutriment of commerce, were uncooked. The race-course knew him not, the bar and billiard saloon offered their allure unavailingly.

For all that, he was no nincompoop who had never known temptation. If the young ladies of the store withheld their hopeless coquetry, awed by his Galahad eye, it was nevertheless his need daily to steel himself against the gleaming and rounded battalions of beauty, for the way to his desk lay through the corset department, and at an hour when the simpering nymphs, still ungarbed, stood in all the sweet shamelessness of their rosy wax. In his progress down this Cytherean aisle, Mr. Dickinson's emotion was such that his Adam's apple might have lent a needed inspiration to the lift boy, but, swiftly as it leapt up to his very teeth, it always subsided, so to speak, unbitten.

It was this experience of the dark god, or devil, within the masculine blood-stream, that made our hero so enthusiastic a murmurer of "Hear! Hear!" at meetings of the Anti-Sunbathing Association. His own pure flesh was, I am glad to say, never exposed. Save where the veins ran like azure rivulets just beneath the skin, it was white as a gardenia under the chaste and cosy wool. His corns, though, were his martyrdom.

AFTER THE BALL

Enough of Dickinson. Who was the fiend?

He was, of all Hell's legions, the most calfish hobbledehoy, stupid to such a degree that not even his bulk could gain him a place in the least football team of the lowest division of the Infernal League. There, where everyone plays, this spelt failure. The fiend, whose name was Tazreel, collected about him one and twenty similar outcasts, and proposed that they should start a club between themselves. Their objection was, that he was too great a booby to be included, and that they had no ball. Let him supply the second deficiency, they said, and they would overlook the first. Nettled, he vowed to, and shambled off to the outer playing fields in the hope of cadging an old one. He saw a cousin of his taking some practice shots with a battered Pope of the fourteenth century, horribly burst asunder at the seams.

"Nick, Nick, what is that ball?"

"Black Mass, Tazreel, why do you stare at him?"

"Give him me. Give him me."

"No."

His cousin described a couple of turns about Tazreel, dribbling with tantalising finesses.

"Get one for yourself," he said.

"I can't," cried Tazreel, "you know what sort of stuff they serve out nowadays. Machine-made muck that busts at the second kick! I want one for a proper game. Give him me. Give him me."

"No." And the cousin netted the pontifical pillule.

"If you want a decent one," he said, "go and tempt a good quality on earth. Yes, go and tempt Mr. Dickinson," he added with a snigger, and scampered off after his game.

At that moment, from an adjacent pitch, the bemuddled and leathern soul of Col. Ingersoll hurtled through the air, and struck Tazreel a stinger on the ear.

AFTER THE BALL

In his fury he sent the poor Colonel back in tremendous style.

"I should be a fine player if I got a chance," he murmured, heartened by the success of his kick. "Damn it! I'll try for Dickinson. I can but fail." This was madness. He told no one of what he was going to do, for fear of mockery, for in that place they talked of Dickinson's soul as office boys do of a film star; meat for their betters.

However, he breached up through the surface of the earth, caught up the curate, disrobed him in mid air, popped him through the bishop's bedroom window, and next moment was under the bed, waiting till Mr. Dickinson should reach down for his handkerchief before switching off the light and settling himself to sleep.

Now he stood upon the hearthrug, subserviently turning the round hat in his hand.

"Who are you, and—and what do you want?" said Mr. Dickinson, very much in a flutter again when he saw how extremely bulky this apparent parson appeared.

The fiend fell upon his knees with a supplicating gesture.

"I want to make myself useful, sir," he mumbled. Mr. Dickinson experienced a spasm of genuine revulsion. It must be, he thought, one of the unemployed, masquerading in a cast-off rig.

"Why don't you work?"

"It's like this, sir, I'm one of the fallen angels. Sir, I can prove it. Look." And whisking round, he slightly adjusted his costume, and displayed to our astonished hero the convincing evidence of his tail.

"What's more, I'm repentant, sir," he continued, speaking in his eagerness, out from between his knees. "Yes, I want to make good, to go straight in future. Oh, boy! I want to be altogether changed. But how?"

AFTER THE BALL

"You go to Mr. Dickinson," they told me. "He's the only man who can show *you* the right path. Be his disciple, serve him, clean his boots, make him rich, any little thing. Take no wages, learn from him; he'll show you what a decent, clean, wholesome, manly life is," they said.

"*Who* said?" asked Mr. Dickinson.

The fiend, with an expression of awe, jerked his thumb at the ceiling.

"Indeed?" said Mr. Dickinson. "Did they?"

"Yessir. They think a lot of you. 'He's wasted,' they said. 'In his narrow way of life. Go thou extend his scope, and increase his good works. Make him famous, envied, admired. Make the ladies love him.'"

"Oh!" said Mr. Dickinson. "I must think this over. I must go into it thoroughly." He tapped his teeth importantly. "If I decide to assist you," he said, "I'll let you know. Meanwhile, I can't have you about this place. Er—begone. Hi! and meet me," he added, causing the fiend to re-appear, more effectively than any servant who opens the door again to catch a last instruction, "and meet me on the Embankment by Battersea Bridge at seven to-morrow evening."

With that the fiend vanished respectfully, and Mr. Dickinson lay all of a tremble, excited, timorous and bewildered.

It might be a trap. On the other hand, need he fear temptation? He desired nothing that was not respectable. But if the fiend spoke the truth, it yet might be a terrible responsibility, a nuisance. He thought of his landlady. But then, if those above had laid this task upon him, dared he refuse? Never shirk responsibility, that way lies promotion; the success booklet was firm on this point. Besides, the fellow might have powers; he might conjure him up a motor-car. Yes, with such a helper he might do

AFTER THE BALL

anything ; become the rage at charity entertainments, a super-Maskelyne on the side of good. Why, he might enter sunbathing establishments, and after a long homily to the ribald nude, he might, at a single flourish clothe them all in unremovable vests, permanent pants, undisplaceable knickers, everlasting suits and eternal petticoats and gowns. His imagination soared and he saw himself cleaning up the big city. The prospect was intoxicating. How he wished to-morrow evening was come ; there were a hundred questions he longed to ask.

He might, though, have dispensed quite easily with the interval, for Tazreel had withdrawn only from the sight. He had lingered on invisibly in the room to devour the recumbent Mr. Dickinson with a loving and burning gaze. He sat, picking his devilish great dog-teeth, on the lower bed-rail.

In the cold morning light, ordinariness crowded in, and our hero found his visions fade a little. They seemed fantastic, dangerous. Every step that he took towards his daily work inclined him to shun such extravagant dreams, and continue to keep to his straight, if extremely narrow, path.

“ There’s a catch in it somewhere.” he said.

Alas, poor Dickinson ! A spark of ambition still smouldered in his breast, and as he entered the store, where it might have been quenched for ever, it prompted him to a little action which undoubtedly changed the whole course of his life.

As he made his way up the aisle of immodest figures, it chanced that one, portrayed by the modeller as in the act of bending to draw on a non-existent stocking, had been backed right into his path.

“ Outrageous ! ” cried Mr. Dickinson, thus roundly roused

AFTER THE BALL

from his reverie. And transferring his newspaper into his left hand, he gave the shameless figure a well-deserved smack. But before that real thrill, which always follows on a good act, had had time to bathe him in its rosy glow, he saw with horror that he had been too rough, too much the cave man. The bending figure shook on its pedestal, and then, slowly, absurdly almost, toppled forward and lay prone upon the floor, utterly still.

"You clumsy fool," cried the deputy superintendent, brassières and suspender belts, emerging from behind an outsize figure. "You've broken her nose."

"I didn't break her nose," cried Mr. Dickinson. ("The floor did," he added to himself, for he was incapable of a lie.)

"You did. I saw you."

"I deny it."

"In flagrante delicto."

"In toto."

"Don't touch her, anyone," shouted the deputy superintendent. "We'll have his finger-prints to prove it."

A debate ensued, and everyone was against Mr. Dickinson. Miss Warple came forward and described the slap, Albert the lift boy, who had also witnessed it, serving as interpreter when occasion required.

"Ugh!" said Miss Warple.

"Damn it, man!" said the manager before them all. "I'd not have thought it of you. It's not the damage; that can, and shall, be made good out of your salary. But Wilfrid Dickinson a hypocrite! This is a great blow to me. In future your books shall be specially checked. Who knows?"

"Oh, dear!" said Mr. Dickinson.

"What's more, you shall be transferred to the ironmongery department."

AFTER THE BALL

"I resign," said Mr. Dickinson, bethinking himself of his powerful disciple.

"Resign, and be damned!" thundered the manager.

A slight monitory tremor ran through our hero's veins at those words. It was lost, though, in other tremors, those of rage, shame and resignation. He pouted and withdrew.

Misunderstood! So ran the current of his thoughts during the hours that followed. He wandered feverishly from tea shop to tea shop finding forgetfulness in none. Just before five he was convulsed by a final spasm, and burst into a heavy perspiration.

"I forgive them," he said.

But, rage deserting him, he was still not at peace.

"To have misunderstood?" So ran the current of his thoughts during the two hours before his appointment. Could his visitor have been the agent of a cruel joke? He remembered the great Thompkins hoax in the baby linen department in '27. A dastardly affair!

"Duped!" he cried, arriving at the bridge five minutes too early, and finding no one awaiting him. "And I've thrown up my job! My job! My job! My job!" In reiteration the word became a mere meaningless syllable. He could hardly believe that it connoted literally—his job.

Soon, however, he saw the fiend approaching him, shambling along at a good pace, and pausing only to take an occasional kick at a stone. He was in a better fitting suit: he had in fact robbed another, and gigantic, clergyman.

"Late," cried Mr. Dickinson, pettishly, for his nerves were all on edge.

With infinite respect the fiend displayed to him a superb gold watch, the hands of which exactly marked the hour.

"Accept it, sir," he said. "I spent my last penny on it,

AFTER THE BALL

as a slight mark of my affection and esteem. But pray, sir, may I venture to hope”

“I have decided to give you a trial,” said Mr. Dickinson, “provided, that is, your—ah, your powers are satisfactory. Show me some of your tricks. Change that match-box into a motor car.”

“I cannot transform objects,” said Tazreel, “nor in any way run counter to the laws of nature. Only the big five can do that. But,” he added, seeing Mr. Dickinson’s look of disappointment, “I am strong; I am swift; I can be invisible; and I enjoy excellent luck at cards. This being so, you need not want for a motor car.”

“Honest work, and plenty of it, is certainly your best help in making good,” said Mr. D., “look to it that you use your powers well, and I will apply their fruits in a way that will be to your credit. What do you propose to do? I will not have you play cards. You say you are swift. Perhaps you could run for prizes in the sports?”

“There’s not much to be made that way,” said the fiend. “If only another of us had repented along of me, we could have gone as front and back legs of a Derby winner.”

“No racing,” said Mr. Dickinson sternly. “Perhaps you could put your strength to good use. A super-navvy on piece-work, eh?”

“The union would crush me,” replied the fiend. “I might box.”

“A manly sport,” cried Mr. Dickinson, feeling his muscle. “You shall become world’s champion and I will be your manager. Thus we will get money for good works, for the fact is, I am leaving my present situation in order to devote myself to the administrative side.”

“I was there when the row was on,” said the fiend.

“Then you saw how I was treated?”

AFTER THE BALL

"They certainly did you dirt. Say, let's muscle in in the morning and clean that joint right up. Yeah?"

"No," said Mr. Dickinson. "I have forgiven them. However, I might go in and try to make them see their vileness. You could be at hand to stay any attempt at brutal violence. I trust there will be none."

The fiend eyed his quarry in grudging admiration. He began to appreciate his quality.

"It'll be a bit of practice," he said, "if I'm to start in as a pug."

"Strewth!" he added, "I've just remembered I had a bit on the three-thirty. Filby came in, too. 'Scuse me, boss, I'll nip off and collar the polony. Then we'll have some eats."

"No," said Mr. Dickinson, "I have forbidden you horse-racing. But stay—this was done before you heard my command. Perhaps the money should not be allowed to rest in the hands of the bookmaker, or the unhappy man may get drunk and beat his wife. That must be prevented at all costs. Go, then, this once, and we will break bread, and devote the rest to good works. Out of evil cometh forth good! How much is it?"

"I stand to net five hundred," said the fiend.

"Good heavens! That will furnish our headquarters. Go, then, we will meet outside the Trocadero and take a frugal meal at the nearest restaurant."

It was a pleasant meal. Mr. Dickinson had oysters to keep his strength up for his future toil; turtle soup that he might know what it was the Lord Mayor ate, and if it would be good for the poor; a little turbot, and some Pol Roger, to which he made a Canæan allusion; a grouse, for he had heard St. Francis was fond of birds, a peach just to taste one, and a little Bisquit du Bouchet for his cold.

AFTER THE BALL

The fiend had a whiting and a plate of cold beef ordered for him by his master, and, it must be admitted, a little page-boy to whom he helped himself during a temporary withdrawal.

They discussed their plans. Next day a suitable suite for their headquarters was to be chosen, something very simple, though of a good address, furnished more like a home than an office, but with a roll-top desk in it.

"I know the very place," said Tazreel. "It's just a modest sort of flatlette in Park Lane."

"Let it have a kitchenette for you to work in," said his master, "and a miniature gymnasium for my exercises and your professional training. A little drawing room, bijou dining room, morning room and that sort of thing for the necessary entertainment of distinguished visitors, a tiny library for myself, the barest sleeping accommodation, and, if possible, a weeny swimming bath for the encouragement of the suitably begarbed pursuit of cleanliness and health."

"Just the place I had in mind," said the fiend. "And at a rental of only two hundred a week."

"Can you earn proportionately?" asked Mr. Dickinson rather shocked.

"Sure thing!" was the reply.

"You may have some cheese, if you like," said Mr. Dickinson.

Next morning they went early to the store, where Mr. Dickinson rebuked his oppressors, who were, when they advanced to make a savage attack on him, invisibly but severely restrained.

"Pick up that figure," said Mr. Dickinson, when they had fled in pain and terror. He pointed to the disgraceful mannequin, who, with her nose restored, still bent to tug the non-existent hose. "I will have her in my room where

AFTER THE BALL

she will no longer lead people astray. She will be a constant urge to effort."

Hastily clothing the figure in a cheap tailor-made, for which Mr. Dickinson commanded his follower to leave the wholesale price on the counter, they took it by the elbow and bore it off to a taxi, thus presenting to the inquisitive crowd all the appearances of detectives arresting a recalcitrant shop-lifter.

Noonday found them installed in Park Lane. Mr. Dickinson outlined to the fiend a routine of scrubbing and sweeping, waiting at table, admitting visitors, tending the wardrobe, and acting as secretary-chauffeur. He described exactly how he liked his breakfast prepared. These little matters, he said, combined with the practice and execution of a career as boxer, and with attendance on himself when he went to rebuke the wicked would keep Tazreel busy, and this would be half the battle towards regeneration. The fiend sighed a little. He was brisk when put to it, but he was devilish lazy by nature, and when he contemplated, in addition to all those tasks, the yet harder one of tempting his master, he almost wished himself back on the desolate touchlines of hell.

However, he set to, and by labouring twenty-two hours out of the twenty-four he managed to keep abreast of his duties. He was greatly chagrined to find, though, when he entered on his pugilistic programme that the science of our British heavyweights was such, that not all his strength could bring him victory without a preliminary tattoo of rabbit punches, nobs on the smelling bottle, rousers on the cigar-trap, and cruel fibs in the bread basket. His claret was tapped, shutters put up, ears thickened, grinders made to rock in their sockets. Not only that, but, lest his tail should betray his shameful origin when he was stripped for

AFTER THE BALL

combat, Mr. Dickinson insisted that he should be docked, and performed the operation himself with a pair of garden shears, notched for branch cutting.

Altogether his lot was a miserable one. The worst of it was, that as the months dragged by Mr. Dickinson showed no signs of committing mortal sin within the meaning of the Act.

Sometimes, when he stood, with folded arms and reproachful penetrating gaze, on the threshold of a sun-bathing establishment or night-club, his sinister bodyguard would jerk a suggestive thumb at some particularly shameless sylph or piquant dancer on a table, twitching meanwhile the corner of his mouth violently towards his eye. A stern rebuke would immediately bring him to his senses.

He went to great trouble to introduce Mr. Dickinson into the society of millionaires, that he might become covetous and misappropriate the subscriptions that poured in. His master, returning from a Babylonian week-end, told him that he had arranged a slap-stick part for him on the films, the salary of which was commensurate with the incredible sufferings and exertions required.

He introduced a vile book into the covers of Mr. Dickinson's "Black Sheep Turned White." Mr. Dickinson told him to glance through each new novel that came out, and to bring to him everything similarly deserving of his public censure.

The fiend, hoping to scare him into a murderous panic, sent him letters, apparently signed by a prominent fellow committeeman, and declaring that he (the fiend) was in reality a notorious dancer named Nola de Montmorency, who had disappeared in unsavoury circumstances some time ago, now masquerading in male attire. Exposure was threatened. "This must be the work of some practical

AFTER THE BALL

joker," said Mr. Dickinson, glancing gravely at the super-masculine countenance of his unattractive factotum.

That worthy then tried to persuade him to enter politics. Mr. Dickinson pointed out that politicians were frequently compelled to tell lies.

He described, in flowing terms, the pleasures of eastern monarchs. His master cut down his diet.

He earnestly besought the good man to consider enlarging his influence by becoming King Wilfrid I. Mr. Dickinson pondered the matter carefully, sighed, and said he feared that the throne could hardly become his by immaculate means. However, he instructed the fiend to put in his spare time speaking on street corners on the off-chance of bringing about a bloodless revolution.

The fiend, then, as if he had become raving mad, staggered in with baskets of jewels which he said he had found ; raised up Helen, Cleopatra, all that lot : discoursed on witchcraft, transported the good man to tops of mountains overlooking fine landscapes, sat up in adjacent flats during his two hours' rest, pinching the babies to make them cry, tried to scrape up an acquaintance for his master among artists ; wrote "Arise, Dickinson, first Emperor of the World!" in phosphorous on his ceiling, and finally introduced him to Mrs. Walker. All was of no avail.

Poor Tazreel grew as lean as a cat. He no longer took light-hearted kicks at stones that lay in his path ; he no longer sang at his scrubbing and sweeping. He was a victim of overwork, nervous depression, insomnia, fits of giddiness, spots before the eyes, bile, utter fatigue.

One day, as he was polishing Mr. Dickinson's brass plate on the front railings, a party of happier fiends passed by, who were doing themselves well at the Dorchester, from which they were organising a mass temptation of the

AFTER THE BALL

Y.M.C.A. They saw Tazreel and gave each other the nudge. Peals of laughter floated back from this party of well-fed-easy-living, successful executives, and scared the taut nerves of the poor plodding failure on the steps.

The fiend, hysterical with rage, rushed upstairs and broke the waxen trophy in the bedroom.

"You clumsy fool," said Mr. Dickinson, entering upon the crash. "However, I forgive you. I'll get a stenographer. Your spelling is atrocious, your typing too slow, your shorthand non-existent. It will give you time to take a weight-lifting job on the Halls."

Tazreel, at this last sentence, uttered a bitter cry. He felt the system was blind, corrupt, utterly rotten, that allowed a man to mislead a poor fiend into the hope of an hour or two's leisure, and then to sentence him to new toils, without incurring immediate and eternal damnation. He began to feel that he never would be able to entrap Mr. Dickinson. There was no one to encourage him, no one to advise, to sympathise, to care. That night the poor fellow cried himself to sleep.

Two days later Maisie Williams sat at the old-fashioned typewriter near the big roll-top desk. She was just a mere slip of a thing, with big, almost frightened, blue eyes that darkened nearly to black in moments of excitement. Maisie had had a hard time. She was alone in the world, and the manager at her last place had been a beast. It was with a sigh of real thankfulness that she sank into the pleasant atmosphere of the little library in Park Lane, where a restful sense of luxury and beauty, for which her starved soul craved, filled the air; and her employer seemed a regular simp.

That day Mr. Dickinson dictated an unusual number of letters. Tea was served in the oak-panelled book-lined room. Maisie could not repress a tiny girlish squeal of delight

AFTER THE BALL

when she saw the delicious *petit fours* which accompanied the fragrant teapot.

"What a child you are!" said Mr. Dickinson kindly, "to squeal like that over a few cakes. My! what a noise you'd make if someone offered you a pearl necklace. It would be deafening."

"Not if it was a relation or a fiancé," said Maisie simply. "But you must not think me a child, Mr. Dickinson, for the fact is I very seldom see any cakes. But, really, I seem to have been grown up ever since I can remember: I've not had any proper childhood at all, I mean. You see, my dear mother died when I was twelve" But Maisie could not go on. She sat bravely blinking back the tears from those big eyes, that seemed to have grown very helpless and very serious, and bright, and appealing and wistful, and so on.

"That's all right. That's all right," said Mr. Dickinson, benevolently.

"It's so kind of you, Mr. Dickinson, to let me tell you all this."

"That's all right," said Mr. Dickinson, "perhaps I am rather a lonely person myself."

"I say, Mr. Butler, the boss is a pretty rich man, isn't he?" said Maisie to Tazreel later on, when Mr. Dickinson had gone off to his meeting.

"Yes'm, he sho is," replied that worthy, pretending to be a negro.

Maisie sat silent, thrilled. What a strange world it was, where a great big rich man could be lonely, just like her little insignificant self. It seemed incredible; too good to be true. She thought of the lion and the mouse.

Yet before a week had passed, Mr. Dickinson, as though the species had become mixed, was calling her "Kitten."

AFTER THE BALL

In a fortnight they were engaged.

Tazreel, when he heard the news, retired to his room, and dashed his head several times against the wall. He was upset. Not being a fiend of foresight, he saw nothing in this arrangement, but the prospect of two bosses instead of one. Besides, he was rather keen on her himself. He felt utterly broken, and determined to resign.

But as he approached the drawing room door, he heard Maisie say, in her high clear girlish voice, into which (so adaptable was she) there was already creeping a little of the authoritative tone suitable to her future high position:

"Wilf, when we're wed there's just one teeny little change I want to make apart from re-furnishing and taking over the rest of the house."

"My little Maisywaisy shall never ask twice," replied the impassioned Dickinson, "for anything that her Wilfy-wumkin can give her."

"I want you to have a proper staff of servants," said Maisie, "and shunt that tough-looking batman of your's right off the premises. He looks at me in a way I don't like."

"I'll break every bone in his body," cried Mr. Dickinson warmly. "But yet—I think you must be mistaken, dear. He works for next to no wages, and he's the most useful creature imaginable."

"If that's what you call love," said Maisie in a disappointed tone, "it's not what I do. You're just like all men; you promise a girl anything just to get your way, and then let her down. I was only testing you, but thank goodness I've found out in time."

"Not at all, my love," said Mr. Dickinson hastily. "I was only playing. He shall go to-morrow."

"And where will the money come from then?" mur-

AFTER THE BALL

mured the listening fiend, catching cries of "Yum! Yum!" and "Oh, honey," from within. He crept back to his little cubby-hole feeling faintly cheered. At all events there would be no more washing up.

"In future," said Mr. D. to him next morning, "you are excused all domestic duties. In fact, I don't want you to be seen here at all. If you come, appear to me only when I'm quite alone, do you understand?"

"O.K. chief," replied the fiend.

"That doesn't mean you're to be idle. On the contrary, you must exert your earning powers to the utmost. The future Mrs. D. needs beauty, she says. It would be downright selfishness to continue to live in the frugal style of a hermit. So you'd better get some more big contracts as soon as you can."

The honeymoon passed like a dream. Tazreel enjoyed it only less than Mr. Dickinson. Left behind in London with nothing to attend to but occasional cables demanding money, he neglected his contracts, lived the life of a man about town, and replenished the exchequer in a way that would have shocked his worthy master.

It was a great day when the domestics crowded into the hall of Mr. Dickinson's little palace in Park Lane to welcome their blushing master and his bride. Tazreel sat invisibly on the stairs, pleased to see the glowing looks which the happy husband lavished on his spouse, and still more pleased to see that two short months in Venice had changed the modest, self-effacing typist into a great lady, in no way unfitted to grace the mansion her adoring partner had prepared for her.

"Why, Wilf," she cried. "This hall looks cramped to me after the Splendide. Can't you widen it somehow? I don't want Society to say I squeeze it to death."

AFTER THE BALL

"It would mean taking the house next door, to make this hall any wider," said Mr. Dickinson with a smile.

"Well, take it then," replied his consort, who was a little frayed by the journey. "You're a man, aren't you? Or aren't you? You got to prove it some way, you know."

"Ssh, my dear," murmured her consort. "The servants will hear you." And he ushered her into the principal drawing room, from whence the sounds of billing and cooing floated out to the fiend's enraptured ear.

"You must earn fifty thousand before the end of the month," said Mr. Dickinson to him at their next interview.

"I'll try, boss," he replied. "But money's not so easy in these days. Still, I think I know a way."

"What's that?" said Mr. Dickinson. "Still, spare me the details, we've a great deal of good work to discuss. The organisation will have to be modified."

A little while later, he summoned the fiend again.

"What was it I asked you for before the end of the month?"

"Fifty thousand," said Tazreel.

"What, only that? I must be losing my memory. I shall need a hundred and fifty at the least. Be sure you don't let me down."

"I doubt if I can come by it honestly," said Tazreel, pulling a long face.

"What's that?" cried his master. "You, an ex-fiend, to talk to me in that way! I hope you do not think I would command you to do anything dishonest. Get it, I say, and don't let me hear another word about it. Put the money on my table next week without fail, or I cast you off, and back you go to Hell for ever."

Tazreel asked nothing much better than this, provided he could only take Mr. Dickinson with him. He half

AFTER THE BALL

thought of getting him to compromise himself over the money, but feared he might slip off the hook ; besides, thieving by proxy is a matter for trial, and the fiend wanted immediate possession of his booty.

He saw, in his invisible visits to their menage, that Mrs. Dickinson, though in all other respects the worthiest young woman in the world, had been starved of beauty so long that her appetite for it was tremendous. She was also a little ambitious to cut a figure among the smart set, and showed signs of not being so passionately enamoured of her husband as he was of her.

In short, the besotted wretch was constantly bothering Tazreel for money, and no longer showing any interest in how it was come by. The fortunate devil, now restored to cheerfulness, did no work except for a few cracksman's jobs, which were child's play, and, keeping half the proceeds for himself, you may be sure he had a jolly little bachelor establishment round the corner in Mount Street, played pranks all over the town, and heartily commiserated his fellows at the Dorchester on the embarrassment they must feel on being seen with their young victims in public.

"I married mine off six months ago," he said. "He is already in debt to the tune of half a million, and soon will sign his name to anything for further supplies. That's nothing, however ; wait till he becomes jealous. My only trouble then will be to prevent him damning himself so completely off his own bat as to be put up for raffle, it being said that I had no hand in it. Fear nothing, though, I shall be watchful to prevent that disaster."

As a matter of fact, Mr. Dickinson very soon paid a visit to the fiend's snug little place in Mount Street. He was so broken down by love and his wife's tantrums that he no longer summoned him as before, but would ring at his door

AFTER THE BALL

quite humbly after dinner, and ask the butler if Mr. Tazreel could possibly spare him a few minutes on a matter of importance. Generally it was money he was wanting; this time, after a good deal of beating about the bush, he asked Tazreel if he could do anything for him in the way of a love philtre.

"What?" cried the fiend, pretending astonishment. "Do you find yourself insufficiently enraptured by such beauty, charm and talent as your wife has, that you'd resort to such means of being awakened?"

"No, indeed," said the poor fellow. "Her virtues are plain enough, but so also is the fact that she is a little impatient when I fail to come up to the high standard her fine taste demands.

"In short, I would have her a little more in love with me, that she might overlook my blemishes, without my having to gild them to the ruinous extent I do. Besides, if I don't become more attractive in her eyes, I can't help feeling (its probably only my fancy) that I may find an intruder in the house: a home-wrecker, I mean."

The fiend, though knowing perfectly well there had been one of that sort hanging about for the last month, chose not to mention it, nor did he give him any sort of warning, but only the philtre: the consequence was that in a very short time there was not one home-wrecker in Park Lane, but at least ten.

When there are ten, a suspicious prying husband such as Mr. Dickinson had become, generally gets wind of one of them sooner or later. One night, the unhappy man broke in upon the fiend's case: he was in a terrible state.

"Ask me no questions," he said. "But tell me, have you anything that will undo the effects of the cursed love philtre you gave me? It's all because of that, I'm sure."

AFTER THE BALL

"Love," replied the fiend, "is, as you yourself should know, a very tricky passion. In cases like your wife's, what lies in the power of any poor devil to arouse is often such as the prince of darkness himself could not quell. I fear, my dear Dickinson, that we shall have to resort to 'witchcraft.'"

"Heaven forbid!" cried the distracted wretch, piteously.

"Why, as to that, it does," replied the sardonic fiend.

"All I want is something in a bottle," moaned his victim.

"Come, Dickinson," said the fiend, with an abominable briskness. "It's time to be honest with yourself, to play the man. You can't just accept my help and shut your eyes to the measures I have to take on your behalf, as you've been doing over money matters, for example, for the last six months."

"What? Do you mean to say the money was not come by honestly?" cried the poor fool in affright. "Good gracious, and I needed another forty thousand this very evening. I must have it, too. Maisie says she must have a tiara: she finds the place draughty."

"Tell her to get it from young what's-his-name," was the sly answer.

"Don't madden me."

"Well, here's the money. Now about this witchcraft. You'd better make up your mind quickly. Every minute you hesitate you're leaving your wife alone. And, as you know, she's very highly strung."

"Oh, dear, what have I to do?"

"Oh, just kill a white goat. That's nothing. Butchers do it every day. And gabble a few words after me. What's there in that, eh?"

"After all, I can always repent," said Mr. Dickinson tremulously.

AFTER THE BALL

"Yes always," said the fiend.

He gave Mr. Dickinson a stiff brandy and soda, and excused himself for a moment, to fetch the goat, he said. Actually, he took advantage of his withdrawal to telephone to Park Lane, to say that Mr. Dickinson was unexpectedly detained, and could not return before morning.

He then went back leading in a poor old Nanny, whom his dupe despatched amid a positive blaze of Bengal Lights, provided gratis by the fiend. After an hour or two spent in such jiggy pokery our hero found himself in possession of a phial which contained no less than half a gill of tap water.

"Now, I suppose, I'm what you might call a lost soul," he said, trembling like a blanc mange.

"I wouldn't call you such," said the fiend.

"No, of course, I can repent."

"You'd better wait till you've administered that," remarked Tazreel, indicating the phial. "Or it would be as useless as tap water."

"All right, I don't repent then. He! He!"

"Spoken like a man! I'll stroll round with you. Here, take the knife as a little 'memento.'"

They walked round in silence through the pleasant night air. When they reached Mr. Dickinson's door,

"I'll just come in and have a drink," said Tazreel.

"Better not, old chap. Maisie doesn't appreciate you."

"Oh, don't worry about the missus. She's in bed. See, there's no lights at all down below."

They entered the hall.

"Nice hat," said the fiend, carelessly picking up a topper from the table. "Your's?"

". . . . No."

"Why, that's certainly the low down," said the fiend

AFTER THE BALL

Caponeishly. "Just while you were jeopardising your soul for her sake—yeah?"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"Dickinson, show yourself a man," said the fiend sternly. "You *are* a man, aren't you? Or aren't you?" He imitated Maisie's voice to perfection.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"You got that knife," hissed the fiend fiendishly. "Come on. I'll hold 'em down."

They rushed up the stairs. Mr. Dickinson applied his ear to the door; the fiend silently opened the door of the lift-shaft. They burst into the bedroom; there were screams, and the deed was done. Mr. Dickinson, with a cry of horror, flung down the fatal blade and turned and bolted out of the room. The fiend followed, tripped him up on the landing, stooped like a hawk after his falling body as he toppled down the lift shaft, nabbed his soul as it popped out, and, with one tremendous kick, landed it favourably into the line-up of Tazreel's United, and in a moment the game was in full swing.



The trousseau

WE had won the toss and our first two batsmen were walking to the wickets, when the rest of us, lying back in deck-chairs within the pavilion enclosure, were surprised to hear a muffled trampling of many feet,—not the crisp crunch of a regiment marching but a sound more slovenly. We looked round and saw, with some curiosity and considerable repugnance, that the male inmates were filing from the County Mental Hospital to the cricket-ground. We assumed, of course, that the two or three hundreds who gradually settled themselves on the wooden benches that encircled the playing-field were not dangerous, but the dreary vacuity of their faces and the inconsequence of their mutterings and movements made us uneasy and lowered our spirits.

Not one of those forlorn and shabby figures paid any attention to the game. Many of them did not even look at it. One, it is true, called out every few minutes: "Boundary, boundary," although at the time our batsmen were quite unable to hit boundaries from the bowling of two male nurses; and we noticed that none of the spectators conversed with another. Each was marooned within his own disordered brain. A tall fellow, for instance, strode restlessly up and down a certain strip of grass, delivering

THE TROUSSEAU

an incoherent lecture, while, screwing up one of his eyes, he showed with pride how it was possible to hold a match in the creases of flesh which he thus made. There were, however, two patients who attracted our particular attention. The first was a portly double-chinned man, better dressed than the others, who never spoke a word, but remained, throughout the game, staring listlessly at the grass between his boots. The senior doctor, as it happened, was sitting among us, and from him we learned that this poor fellow had been a German doctor who, long before even the great war, had owned a good practice in the neighbourhood. His wife had gone off with another man, and within a few weeks he himself had entered the Mental Hospital. He had now been there, said our host, for twenty years, but in all that time had hardly spoken a word. Some visitors had once hoped to revive his earlier self by talking to him in German, but the patient's mind was in a fog so dense that nothing could pierce it. The other man who aroused our curiosity was of an opposite kind. He wore sand-shoes, trousers, a white shirt and a coloured handkerchief which he had wound about his head. To and fro he walked, at a smart pace, in front of those unresponsive benches, playing a mouth-organ, and at the same time juggling dexterously either with Indian clubs or a number of coloured balls. And all the while he kept up a running commentary as though he were addressing a breathless audience. We began to wonder how long he could endure the physical effort of this performance, seeing that for three-quarters of an hour he never stopped, but at last, quite suddenly, he drew himself up to attention, bowed and called out to the serried gargoyles who were sitting in front of him and paying him no heed, "Ladies and gentlemen, that is the end. The evening performance will begin at nine o'clock

THE TROUSSEAU

sharp. Good-night, good-night!" With that, he packed up his toys in a knapsack which he placed on the ground, and lying with his head upon it, pretended to go fast asleep: but within a few minutes up he jumped and began once more to throw and catch his clubs, never missing one of them, as he walked rapidly up and down.

"He does that all day," said the doctor, "and he is about the fittest man, physically, that I've ever seen. Not an ounce of fat on him. He was, of course, a professional—worked in the music-halls—but he has been here longer than I have, and I've been here ten years."

"Naturally," said one of us, "you get used to them, but at first sight they are very pathetic and rather repulsive."

It was then that the doctor told us the story of Annie Wood.

"We do get used to them," he observed, "otherwise, I daresay, we should end up by becoming like them! But the most pathetic case which has ever come under my care was a woman in a very much smaller hospital at H——. She had been there for about thirty years, and when I knew her she must have been quite fifty. Annie Wood, that was her name. Far from being any trouble, she was a model patient; so harmless and so comparatively intelligent that we gave her one or two little jobs to do. For example, she acted as librarian—and did her work conscientiously and well. There's no doubt that she was certifiable, but I always felt that it was a pity for her to be in a public institution. Many women who are quite as defective as Annie live with their families, and no harm comes of it. Annie, however, had no relatives—or none who was willing to look after her; and I used to wish that some friend would come on visiting-day and decide to remove the poor thing. You know, of course, that many patients can leave a Mental

THE TROUSSEAU

Hospital if anyone will be responsible for their behaviour and their upkeep? No? It is so, but of course there are few people who care to take up such a burden.

“Well, one afternoon I was going on my rounds of the Female Ward, and had come to Annie Wood, when I noticed that there was a new light in her eyes. ‘Why, Annie,’ I said, ‘have you come into a fortune? I never saw you looking so cheerful.’ ‘Don’t tease, Doctor,’ she replied. ‘It isn’t a fortune, but I’ve found a very old friend, and he’s coming again to-day.’ ‘Excellent!’ I remarked, ‘—you must introduce him to me.’ ‘Oh, I will, sir,’ she responded. ‘We’ve known each other for thirty years, and his name is Mr. Rushby. I hadn’t seen him, not till last Thursday, for I don’t know how long. Oh, years and years it is.’

“I had guessed for a long time that her mental breakdown had been caused by sexual starvation acting upon a latent instability which she had inherited from her maternal grandmother; and I therefore realised that this Mr. Rushby was unconsciously stimulating her sexual reveries. I wondered if the excitement would make her worse, but decided that, on the whole, it would act as a beneficial stimulus.

“On the next visiting-day I saw the two of them evidently talking about old times and all the hundred and one little matters which, after all, afford as much mental exercise as even the majority of sane people seem prepared to take. I went up to the two old friends. Rushby was a man of about Annie’s age; neatly dressed, rather timid in manner, but obviously a gentle soul. He told me that he had been a fishmonger in T——, a small town not five miles away from the Hospital, and that, having inherited a little money, he had retired two years before. ‘Then mind you come here whenever you can,’ I told him, ‘and cheer up Miss Wood.’ ‘Thank you, sir,’ he replied, ‘it’s what I’ve a

THE TROUSSEAU

mind to do.' And I noticed that Annie smiled shyly like a very young girl.

"Rushby was as good as his word. Not a week passed without his paying us a visit, and the effect upon Annie was a great deal better than any that I had even hoped to see. In fact, if she had been in the outside world, nobody could possibly have guessed that there was anything wrong with her. I don't mean, of course, that she was really bright, but then—how many people are? What I do mean is that, after about four months, she became almost like a normal woman whose intellect is a bit below par.

"You can imagine, I am sure, how pleased I was when one day Rushby hesitantly asked me if he could have a private interview. 'It's important,' he said, apologetically. Of course, I led him into my study, gave him a cigarette, and asked him what was in his mind. 'You see, Doctor,' he said with embarrassment, 'Miss Wood and I are very old friends, and I was wondering——.' He stopped and nervously fingered a paper-weight on the table. 'You wondered,' I suggested, 'whether it wouldn't be possible to get her out of the Hospital. Is that it?' 'Yes, Doctor, that's just it,' he resumed eagerly. 'I can't bear to think of her being here all these years. And it's not as though she was really bad, is it?' 'Not a bit,' said I, 'and if anyone will be responsible for her, she could leave the hospital in a day or two.' 'Ah,' exclaimed Rushby, 'that's what one of the nurses told me. So it's true! Then you'd agree to let her out if I said—well, that I wanted to marry her?' At this, I confess, I was just a little surprised, but as they couldn't have any children by reason of Annie's age, I was even more pleased. 'Certainly,' I told him. 'You will have to give a written undertaking that you will support her and hold yourself responsible for seeing that

THE TROUSSEAU

she comes to no harm.' 'Of course I will,' he assured me. 'I've made the arrangements with the Registrar. So may I call for her next Tuesday?' I told him that he could; and when we had shaken hands, I saw him out and then went back, very well pleased, to make the necessary arrangements for Annie Wood's departure. He looked very happy as he walked away.

"During the next few days Annie Wood was exceedingly busy. I teased her unmercifully, as they say, when I found that she was making her trousseau,—a poor enough trousseau, you may be sure, though the fishmonger had given her a few pounds with which to buy materials. Annie did not resent my teasing. On the contrary, she liked it. She felt so important, and I don't think I've ever seen anyone who looked so radiantly happy—except a few children. 'Don't forget all about us, Annie,' I said, 'when you're out in the big world. After all, we've done our best for you during twenty-five years, haven't we?' 'Oh, Doctor,' she responded, 'I'll never forget it. But I do want to go about, free, with Mr. Rushby.' 'Another two days,' I assured her, 'and he'll be driving you away in a cab.'"

Our wickets had been falling, not catastrophically, but fast enough to make it necessary for me to go into the pavilion and put my pads on. For once in my life I wished that I were a non-combatant in a cricket match; but since there was no help for it, I regretfully absented myself, hearing the doctor's voice as he finished the story, but not being able to catch more than a word or two.

By the time that I was accoutred for my innings he had, of course, come to an end and was discoursing upon insanity in general. In fact, he was saying, I remember, that the violent cases pleased him most because they soon burnt themselves out, and the patient recovered. "It's the fixed

THE TROUSSEAU

idea or melancholia," he told us, "which usually means that the patient is here for life." I could hardly ask him to repeat the end of the tale, and so I suggested to our slow bowler that he and I should take a walk round the field: and as we passed the indefatigable juggler, I said to my friend, "And what happened to Annie Wood?" "Oh," he answered, "a very queer story. The fishmonger—what was his name?"

"Rushby," I prompted.

"Well," continued my friend, "he didn't turn up on the day that he was expected: but the doctor assumed that there had been some technical hitch. Meanwhile, the old looney woman stitched away, all day long, at her trousseau. She had such faith in the fishmonger that it never entered her head that he wouldn't turn up at all. But he didn't."

"That was pretty rotten," I commented. "Of course, the idea of marrying an imbecile is rather repellent, but still—poor Annie had counted on this marriage as she had never counted on anything else. And who knows? It might have done something miraculous to her poor brain. I'm afraid the fishmonger was a very bad lot."

"No," said the bowler. "It was worse than that. As the days went by, the doctor thought as you do; and as he was evidently quite fond of Annie, he decided that he would have it out with Rushby. Accordingly, he went to Rushby's house,—and what do you think he discovered?"

"Suicide?"

"No," answered my friend, and then, glancing at the cricketers, he said: "Hullo! Henderson's been given out leg-before. You'll have to go in and hit up a hurricane thirty!"

"But what happened?" I persisted, taking off my blazer and giving it to my companion.

"The doctor says," he replied, "that Rushby had been taken away, three days earlier, to another asylum."

The fishing party

IT was the summer of the drought. For four months not a drop of rain fell.

The cattle bellowed for water, and the line gangs drank astounding quantities of beer. The dried aspen leaves broke and fell with their own quivering, and the tortured earth cracked. To the south, a pillar of smoke rose from the burning Bjersjö bogs to the scorched sky like a dark and ominous finger of God.

The heat made the line unsafe ; unexpectedly a rail would bend here and there. The linesmen had a difficult time of it tramping unceasingly up and down the line, squad after squad, with hammers ringing on rails, picks swinging, and heavy boots crunching in the gravel. The sweat poured from them, but in the equipment of each squad there was a hand-car laden with beer.

The river was almost dead. Where there had been a rapid before, there was now only a heap of stones, crowned with wreaths of blackened algæ like mourning weeds. Between the stones, the water stood still in dark pools full of strange life. Large pike lay motionless, panting peacefully in the midst of schools of perch and roach, their hunting

THE FISHING PARTY

instincts deadened by their common peril, like wolf and deer fleeing side by side from a prairie fire.

The water at Brinka mill stood at its lowest level that summer, even lower than in '68. And yet '68 was known as the year of the great drought.

It was the summer Jöns the Pumper became our friend, Bombi Bitt and mine—though the preliminaries hardly seemed promising.

Jöns was both captain and crew of the Pump, the railway water and coaling station, which consisted of a water-tower with a wind-turbine on the roof, and a coalyard. All the men at the station envied Jöns his easy job; since it is always windy in South Sweden, the wind turbine took care of itself, keeping the great water cistern in the tower filled, and the job of carrying the baskets of coal required each day up to the bridge by the rails took only one or two hours. Jöns smiled contentedly when the station-men called him a lazy dog. In the tower, he drank his coffee with a dash of gin, or he straddled on the bridge, spitting down to the shining rails without ever missing them. Once a day, with the solemn and important air of the expert, he would make an expedition to the turbine on the roof, an oil canister in his hand and a bunch of cotton waste stuck into his belt.

It is always windy in South Sweden, and always has been—but that summer it was not. A dead calm reigned, so utterly dead that Jöns the Pumper's wind-turbine made only a dozen revolutions between June and September. But the engineer who had constructed the water tower had foreseen the possibility of such a calm, and had built a hand-pump into the lower floor. For years this pump had been rusting, but that summer it lost its rust. The construction was simple; the plunger was moved up and down by means of a connecting-rod driven by a great wheel

THE FISHING PARTY

which had to be turned, round and round and round—by Jöns the Pumper. He worked with his chest bare in the hot greasy air of the tower. The furrows of sweat in the coal-dust on his skin were like a map outlined in white on a black ground. Silently, stubbornly, hopelessly he laboured at his wheel like a galley-slave at his oar. His eyes were fixed on the plummet near the wall, hanging by a string connected with a float in the cistern, and descending slowly as the hour-hand of a clock along a clumsy wooden scale graded in inches. Six times daily, Jöns laboriously worked the plummet down to the last line of the scale, and six times daily he was forced to press down with his own hand the lever which emptied the cistern and in a few minutes raised the plummet again to the ceiling, for six times each day a thirsty engine stopped outside the water-tower. Then it was Jöns's business to be at his post on the narrow bridge, to shout "stop!" when the tender was exactly opposite the discharge-pipe, to pull the pipe out over the tank, and to press down the lever. He watched the heavy stream of water splash into the interior of the tender with eyes as greedy as a drinker's watching a cask with the spigot knocked out, and the precious liquid running away into the sand. And when the tank was full and the cistern empty, the engine went on without so much as a "thank you." Jöns would return to his tower chamber and turn the wheel with his eyes raised to the plummet hanging high as heaven again.

All summer Jöns remained with his pump. In the tower, he made up a cot of two empty wooden sugar cases with sackcloth on top, on which he slept. Three times a day his little daughter brought him his meals. His wife was not permitted to come; she was too talkative, and Jöns could not afford to waste his strength in talking. As a

THE FISHING PARTY

matter of fact, very few people did talk to him, at least after the time one of the station-men looked in and said in ironic praise :

“Hard-working chap you are. You’ll be getting promoted if you don’t watch out.”

Jöns said nothing. The station-man flew out the back door with the screw-wrench in his head—and Jöns had not even let go the wheel.

One day early in July, Bombi Bitt and I were on our way to the river. Then we got as far as the Pump, Bombi Bitt said :

“I say. Let’s bathe. Under the drain here. You start, and I’ll pull the lever down.”

The proposal was too tempting ; in a moment I had got off my shirt and shorts, and stood naked between the rails. Bombi Bitt ascended the bridge, the spout slid out, the lever came down, and a cascade of water poured over me. The impact threw me to the ground, completely swamping me. My ear-drums almost gave way. Suddenly the downpour ceased. When vision returned to me, I discovered Jöns the Pumper on the bridge. With one hand, he was holding Bombi Bitt by the nape of the neck, and the other was raised for a blow. Murder was in his eyes, and the hair that grew on his forehead bristled like an angry dog’s. I was so frightened that before I knew it I had called out :

“I’ve asked Dad !”

It has since amazed me that respect for his superior could so promptly check the Pumper’s rage. We had, of course, wasted a tremendous amount of water, and we realised too late that that water was Jön’s own sweat.

But Jöns did not kill us. He merely gave me a black look and said :

“You’re lying, Eli. Come along, both of you. I’ll talk to the chief later.”

THE FISHING PARTY

Frightened and speechless, we followed Jöns into the tower-room. My clothes were still out on the line. Jöns looked at the plummet and spoke.

"Two inches you've wasted, and two inches you're going to pump. Go ahead, get on the job."

He threw himself on his cot, and Bombi Bitt and I began to turn the wheel. Every now and then we looked at Jöns lying on his cot with his eyes closed. Once we heard him mutter :

"And by God there'll be no snow stopping up the line in July. Though I wouldn't be surprised a summer like this."

When we had pumped four inches, I felt that my back was going. It was lucky Jöns awoke just then, for I should have gone on pumping any length of time without any back. Jöns took the wheel.

"That'll do," he said. "If you want to come again to-morrow, it's all right with me."

Before leaving, I unburdened my conscience.

"Jöns—I haven't asked Dad."

"I knew that all along, Eli. But I ain't the one to go telling tales."

On the way home, Bombi Bitt said :

"He's a rippin' good fellow, Eli. He could've thrown us in the well under the tower 'seasy as anything. I know he did throw a man in there once, and nobody else has a key to the cellar where the well is—'n anyway it's against the rules for anybody else to go in there."

So we had had a narrow escape.

Of course we pumped every day, at least four inches a day, though in two sessions, and sunned ourselves in Jöns the Pumper's favour. After a fortnight, we had our first reward in the shape of a fishing-line made of a zither string.

THE FISHING PARTY

We were proud as kings. Everybody knew that Jöns made the best fishing-lines in all the Parish of Färs, but no one had ever heard of his giving away or even selling one.

One day in August, Jöns said :

"If you behave yourselves, we'll go fishing in Swanson's brook on Saturday."

"Not me," said Bombi Bitt. "He's got a gun."

Jöns's suggestion to go fishing in Swanson's brook was to us a stupendous one, for Swanson's farm was a paradise to which none were admitted. Swanson was a Swedish-American who had come back to Sweden and bought some property in Tosterup through which the river flowed for a distance of about a third of a mile. Swanson had learned in the States how to defend his property. Like a watch-dog, he guarded his fruit orchard, his hazel bushes and his fishing grounds. His method was an efficient one. As Bombi Bitt had said, he used a gun, and the first charge consisted of rock salt, the second of buckshot. No trespassers were safe. Bombi Bitt assured me that though it was a whole year since he had visited the Swanson property, grains of salt were still coming out of his left thigh.

Under such conditions, it was no wonder the fish collected in Swanson's protected waters. Strange tales were told of them. People whispered of the great Pike in the north pool who was blind in both eyes and had a red roach for a pilot. There was a giant eel with great horns on his forehead, and many years ago, Jöns the Pumper had caught ten score of crayfish under a single great rock.

"Ain't no risk," Jöns reassured us. "Swanson's going to a meeting in Malmö on Saturday, and won't be back till Sunday night. I took the trouble to find that out. So here's where we go fishin'. There'll be you two 'n me 'n Vricklund. And Eliza's coming along to boil the coffee."

THE FISHING PARTY

It was three days to Saturday, and we were in a fever of impatience, Bombi Bitt and I. With Jöns sprawling on his cot, we pumped all day to make the time pass more quickly. Our conversation was confined to "Only three days more!" "Only two days more!" "Only one day more!"

Imagine going on a fishing party with illustrious people like Jöns the Pumper and Vricklund! The latter was a house-painter named Lund, but people called him Vricklund* because at times he was a bit mad. Twice yearly, his madness would come upon him, in spring and in autumn, when the trees were in leaf and when they shed. Then Vricklund would not touch his brushes, but would wander like a lost soul along the roads, striking the tree-trunks and telephone posts with a great oak club, and singing strange songs all the while. When Vricklund "walked," people kept out of his way, for his strength was enormous, and his eyes burned with a dangerous fire.

Eliza was Vricklund's mistress; for his strength and his madness' sake, she was faithful to him.

Saturday comes round once a week, but such a Saturday as that comes but once in a lifetime.

The first thing in the morning, Vricklund put in an appearance, turning the tower room dark as his frame filled the doorway. With a "hi, boys!" he swung to the floor the sack filled with bottles of beer which he had been carrying on his back. Drawing his broad sheath-knife, he spun it with an elegant flourish across the room, embedding it in one of the wall beams! then he took off his coat and hung it on the knife. He was every inch a man, as big as a house, and had his shirt ripped open in front, exposing his broad, hairy chest. His arms were sledge-hammers, his neck a

* From the verb *vricka*, meaning literally "to put out of joint."

THE FISHING PARTY

bull's. His face was a healthy pink and his eyes were brown. A great moustache, black as the knave of spades, artfully concealed his upper quid of tobacco.

He took the pump wheel, turning it with one hand, and sometimes only with his little finger. Bombi Bitt and I waited on him, reverently handing him his beer. The Pumper sat on his cot making a fish-grains of forks, the prongs of which he filed into barbs. Later in the day, Bombi Bitt and I were sent down to the river to scrub six coal baskets in which to put the fish. The day was filled with all sorts of tasks.

Towards evening, Eliza arrived, carrying a large hamper of food. She entered timidly and in silence, and crouched down inside the door with her eyes cast down, not daring to look at the men-folk for fear of Vricklund. She had beautiful red-blonde hair and a soft white skin with freckles as clear and transparent as grains of tapioca in milk. Her limbs were soft and slender, and she had a slim, lovely figure. Her naked, dust-covered feet had never known the care of a pedicure, but the blue veins gleamed through the dust.

At half-past nine, the last train went through, and immediately afterwards the fishing party set off, Vricklund having promised to pump the cistern full before the first train in the morning. In single file, we clambered down the narrow path above the river like a row of fireflies, each of us carrying one of the railway signal lamps. The evening was cloudy and the moon was obscured. Vricklund led with a bunch of shovels on his shoulder. He had ordered out the shovels himself, and no one had dared ask him what they were for. Next came the Pumper with the empty coal baskets piled up in a tower on his back, followed by Eliza with the hamper. Bombi Bitt and I brought up the

THE FISHING PARTY

rear, dragging the sack containing the bottles of beer between us. Vricklund sang in a deep bass voice :

"The fisherman's luck is deep as the sea, where the fish are swimming in shoals. Believe that? I speak of the holy fishermen catching souls as we catch herrings.

"Oh, yes, I know, for the fisherman far out at sea often gets stones for bread. But may not the winds of heaven tear the nets of soul-fishers ?

"How could they do it? For the fisher of souls has no use for net or fish-hook, but only his tongue. But it may happen to him, as it did to the parson in Hannas, that he chattered so much that his throat wore out and his voice was lost."

We must have walked for about half an hour when Jöns stopped and said :

"We'd better go down here and then up through Swanson's, and catch crayfish and spear some turbot."

Vricklund's voice replied out of the darkness above his lantern :

"No, we'll start at Hallarna."

Hallarna was the name of a spot at which the river narrowed between steep banks of slate. Here, just at the boundary of the Swanson property, it formed a waterfall below which it continued on its winding way through Swanson's fields.

"Hell, we're not going *with* the stream, are we ?"

"We're going to Hallarna," Vricklund repeated with finality. "Don't you see, Pumper? Think I took the shovels to swat flies? Here's Swanson for ten years been shootin' at poor devils and collectin' more fish than he'll ever be able to eat. Now we're going to dam the river at Hallarna, and then we'll empty Swanson's part of it, empty it as dry as a bone, an' take every bit of fish in it. An' anybody that don't want to can turn around and go home again."

THE FISHING PARTY

The magnificence of this plan dumbfounded even Jöns, who could only ejaculate "Christ!"

The procession continued on its way. Bombi Bitt whispered in my ear:

"I hope we don't catch it for this. But I don't care a damn."

At Hallarna, Vricklund organised the job of damming. First, he and Jöns dropped a line of rocks straight across the stream. Their lanterns, placed on the shore to serve as searchlights, illuminated the water, which still swirled in rapids, in spite of the drought, at the mouth of the miniature canyon. We watched the two men stumbling out of the dark into the circle of light with great rocks in their arms, the water spattering and splashing about them as they dropped the rocks into it.

Bombi Bitt and I were detailed to use the shovels on Swanson's field. Following Vricklund's instructions, we cut out clods of turf about three-feet square, and Eliza carried them down to the river, where she stacked them in piles. She lifted the great clods in her arms, and some of the dry earth loosened, falling upon and inside her coarse cotton dress.

When the dam of rocks was ready and the interstices stopped with turf, the rapids ceased swirling, and the moon came out. Little by little, the water stopped trickling below the dam. We began to fish.

We divided the river into sections, and took one section at a time. The Pumper and Vricklund walked on opposite sides and picked crayfish out of the banks, now disappearing into the shadow of the alder and hazel bushes, now brightly illuminated by the moonlight. They would plunge their naked arms almost to the shoulder into the burrows and pull them out again with their hands filled with crayfish, which

THE FISHING PARTY

they stuffed into sacks hanging by strings from their necks. In the middle of the stream, Bombi Bitt and I stalked with a lantern in one hand and the grains in the other. Both of us were soaked to the skin, and our knees and elbows were bruised and bloody from the stones. But we were so intent on our fishing that we paid no attention to this. We speared fat turbot and eels that twisted round our arms as the grains struck home. Our weapons were dyed red with their blood. We must have had savage instincts. With the handles of our grains we beat great pike and perch that were splashing about in the shallow water.

What we caught we threw ashore, where Eliza was busy with Vricklund's knife. A stab behind the head, a slit down the belly, and the entrails ran out into the grass. Eliza was bloody to the elbows. The baskets filled with fish.

Suddenly a roar came from Vricklund.

"You'd bite, would you, you devil!"

Something slapped on to a large rock beside me, and there was a spatter of something warm and damp on my face. I wiped my cheek with my hand and looked at it. Blood. Playing the rays of my lantern over the rock, I discovered a water rat, large as a sucking-pig, plastered to the rock like a smear of paint. Vricklund had thrown it with such force that it was entirely flattened by the impact.

"Beer," he ordered, and Eliza fetched an armful of bottles. Resting from our labours, we sat on the rocks in the stream, and the Pumper and Vricklund conversed on water-rats and kindred subjects as they drank. Eliza was busy in the field, not far from the north pool, where she was setting fire to a heap of dry twigs and brush. We could see her in the light of the flames setting out the contents of the hamper in the grass, and boiling crayfish and coffee.

THE FISHING PARTY

"Now," said Vricklund, "we're going to fill our insides with food, and gin too. We've cleaned up the whole stream except the north pool, and we'll save that to the last. And by God, I'll catch the Horned Eel there, I swear I will!"

At a sign from Eliza, we sat down round the blazing fire. And what a meal that was! Butter and black bread, bacon, fresh boiled perch and hot crayfish. Vricklund took a quart bottle of gin out of the hamper, and swinging it above his head, sang till the echoes rang.

The bottle is round and rolls when it's full,
Keep it close by you, and take a long pull,
Cheer your spirits and take your chance,
Swing the flask like your girl in the dance!
Gin is fire and gin is ice,
It's hell and dreams and paradise!

"That's a damn' good song," the Pumper pronounced. "Let's have a drink on it."

They took turns at the bottle, measuring portions by their thumbs. Bombi Bitt took a nip like a regular man, but I got nothing. The Pumper was being careful.

"The chief'd ramp if he ever found out," he said.

Eliza looked like a fairy princess where she knelt beside the fire, with the flickering flames lighting up her figure against the background of dark hazel bushes. Her pale face was flushed, and her loosened hair fell in thick waves over her back and shoulders. In her hair and on the cheap blue dress, thousands of fish scales sparkled like precious gems.

The Pumper and Vricklund had a crayfish-eating contest. The latter asserted that he could shell them in his mouth. I believe he swallowed them shell and all; certainly what he spat out was incredibly little.

We concluded our breakfast with boiling hot coffee. The day was just beginning to break, and it was time to attack the north pool.

THE FISHING PARTY

Vricklund made his dispositions.

"I'll go alone and take the largest grains. You stay here and hold your tongues. Eels can hear the grass grow. If I catch the Eel, I keep it."

He meant the Horned Eel. We rose to our feet, and stood silent in tense expectation. The north pool lay dark and mysterious, full of water in spite of the drought and our dam. A superstitious fear of that pool prevailed in the village, and many believed it was bottomless.

Vricklund approached it with the large grains in his hand. He splashed into the water, and began to wade out, feeling his way with his toes. Soon the water reached his armpits. Suddenly he disappeared below the surface as if he had been drawn down by an invisible hand. The water seethed and bubbled. The Pumper said in a hoarse whisper :

"Suppose he gets drowned."

With something half of contempt and half of resignation in her tired voice, Eliza replied :

"He won't die."

She was right. Vricklund did not die. Rising like a hippopotamus out of the black water, he staggered towards the shore. But he was not alone. In his embrace he held a dark, monstrous thing that whipped the water to a foam. It was the Eel. When Vricklund reached the shore, he threw himself with a great jump backwards into the field, with the monster on top of him.

I shall never forget the struggle that followed. Like a white blanket, the mist floated up from the river and lay on the grass, framed by the dark rim of alder and hazel bushes. The pale light of morning struggled with the night, and the glow of the dying embers rose and fell under the ashes.

With our necks stretched and our eyes starting from

THE FISHING PARTY

our heads, Bombi Bitt and the Pumper and I looked on. But Eliza stood with her eyes closed, as if she belonged to another world.

On the field of battle, Vricklund and the Eel went through the motions of a grotesque dance. The Eel pulled towards the pool, Vricklund away from it. Sometimes the Eel reared, and it looked as if Vricklund were battling with a live telephone post.

Suddenly Bombi Bitt seized my arm, and whispered :

“ Look ! The horns ! ”

For a moment the Eel stood upright, and its head showed clear against the brightening eastern sky. On its head were horns, two large, distinct horns. I shivered with excitement.

The Eel tripped Vricklund up, and both of them rolled over, crawling on the ground in a horrible embrace. Now we would see Vricklund's broad, dark back, and now the Eel's greyish-yellow belly. Then suddenly it arched like a bridge, and on top of it lay Vricklund, a panting bull on a swaying springboard. Jerkily, the living springboard moved towards the pool. Inch by inch it progressed. Vricklund, who was worn out, perceived the danger and shouted :

“ Quick ! My knife ! ”

Eliza suddenly came to life. Quick as a flash she bent down and drew the knife, which had been stuck into one of the baskets of crayfish. The broad, bright blade lay heavy as an axe in her slender hand. With her eyes wide open she crouched for a spring. It was the first time I saw her eyes, and I thrilled with horror. They blazed with eternal damnation, holding a fire that froze and burned and a light that looked as if reflected in ink.

In two catlike bounds she reached the writhing mass in the field and drove the knife into it. A yell of pain followed, and under a terrific blow from Vricklund Eliza fell on her

THE FISHING PARTY

back and remained motionless on the ground. Vricklund and the Eel joined once more in their embrace. We ran forward. The battle was over. The giant Eel lay still in the grass.

Vricklund rose to his knees, his face pale and blood-stained.

"I bit him to death," he said.

Then he drew out the knife, which was plunged to the hilt in his left shoulder. He grimaced with pain, and turning to Eliza he said :

"You did that on purpose, Eliza, I know you did. You aimed it straight at me ! But don't forget this—flesh wounds won't kill me !"

Eliza lay still in the grass, and laughed a silent bitter laugh. Her expression was eloquent, but not a sound passed her lips.

The blood ran down Vricklund's bare chest, but he was versed in the art of healing.

"Bombi Bitt," he said, "run over to the bushes and collect as many spiders' webs as you can, they stop bleeding. But be quick about it."

Bombi Bitt was soon back again, and Vricklund pressed a large cake of spiders' webs to the wound. The Pumper made a bandage of a torn-off shirt sleeve.

Vricklund was soon quite himself again. He knocked the bottom off the empty gin flask, put it to his lips like a trumpet, and blew a loud flourish. From the great, slimy body on the ground came a deep sigh. The Eel contracted and swelled like an earthworm when it is touched. Then quick as a flash it slid through the grass towards the pool, where it slipped down a hole in the grassy bank. At that very moment the dam gave way with a crash and the liberated waters poured into the river-bed and filled the pool. The

THE FISHING PARTY

Pumper seized a grains and was about to throw himself on the Eel while half of it was still outside the hole. But Vricklund stopped him.

"Leave it alone, Pumper," he said. "It's not a real eel. I saw it just when it was going in the hole. It pulled its horns down like a dog putting his ears back."

The Eel disappeared.

Vricklund turned to Eliza and said solemnly :

"Woman, I forgive you your blood-red sin for the sake of your white hide. Get up, pack your things, and let's get out of here."

Without a word Eliza arose and began to pack the hamper.

The Pumper inspected the catch and said :

"This'll do us for the whole winter. We'll sell the crayfish and salt the rest of it. Now to get it all home."

He broke off a slender young birch and removed the branches. The six baskets, filled to the brim with fish and crayfish, were strung up on the birch, and the Pumper and Vricklund lifted the ends to their shoulders. We walked home shivering in our wet clothes for the sunrise is cold and gives only light but no heat.

Next morning Bombi Bitt and I returned to the scene of battle. Swanson's field looked like a peat-bog, with black trenches where we had dug out the turf. In the hole where the Eel had disappeared we found one of his horns, which he probably had to sacrifice to get through.

That horn is still in my possession, decking my writing-table as a trophy of that memorable night. Much later, when I was at the university, I showed it to a biologist. He examined it and laughed, explaining that it was an ordinary cow's horn. Since then I have had a distrust of biologists. Was ever a biologist out fishing with Vricklund? And may not *one* eel have horns, even if all the rest have none?

On the march

WHERE are we going? I say, where does all this lead to? We've been marching fifteen hours now. 'Cept for the halts; what good do they do? Ten minutes an hour. We're right up high now. It gets colder and higher and darker. We shouldn't have had all these hours of light if we weren't marching east. In the morning when we were down in the plain, miles and miles off, what was the name? Oh, I forget these names. What's the good, anyway, of remembering them? I shan't tell strangers in a bar when I get home how we were marching from a place in a valley miles and miles off, miles off from the mountains. So that,—what was I saying? Why do I think, what was I saying when it was what was I thinking? Anyway, who knows I shall come back to this place? Or go home and be in a bar again to tell of my marching? They don't want to hear, when you go home on leave. No, sir, we've gone too deep for them. We who face death, though that is not *our* trouble; not facing, but waiting for death rather. We, who have waited for death, have gone down too deep, so that they turn from us away to the wall. I said: Do you see what it is like, Margaret? And she turned her body away from me to the wall. Even in the half-light she closed

ON THE MARCH

her eyes against the image. But it's not sight they shrink from, not their eyes they must close against us, but their minds against understanding. They can't help doing that; just as the eye blinks when a grit flies at it.

In the morning down in the plain where dawn came early over the mountains, the first sun's ray struck on our faces as we ran up on parade, and dazzled our tired eyes. And so we've marched these fifteen hours beneath the same sun. God blind the sun. He said: Look down in the valley at the lake and those houses. Those dots are cows in a field. Haven't you seen cows in a field before? I said; let a man lay quiet when he has ten minutes halt. Haven't you been up a hill before and seen how things look smaller in a valley? I said. My puttees itched and I undid them. My flesh was pinched into weals and weals winding round my legs. It's peace here, he said. But even there we could hear the guns.

Then we fell in. Fifteen hours, it's too much. How can they ask so much. Each step I take with my right hurts, that blister. Hell, I could kill someone. There's no end to what they ask. If there was singing. But we're too near for singing. Every sound carries in these valleys. And what are we going for? Reach the objective? This pack is wrenching back my shoulders. Where was I? Why do I say where? As if I were somewhere in my mind and not my mind somewhere in me. Shut up, mind. Oh, I'm so tired. How can they all go on? Why don't they lie down? Remember, Jenkins fainted and fell; and the man behind tripped and fell. And the next. And so on, till there was a pile of them. Just went on going on. Too tired to do anything but follow behind the man in front, until he faints and falls and you faint and fall, too tired. No, not faint, just fall. Just fall was what I meant.

ON THE MARCH

Only one fainting. What's the object; the objective? Place you've got to go to. Why've you got to go there? 'Cos they tell you. Why do they tell you to go some place? Why don't they say, softly, lie down some place, lie down there. Sleep there. You mustn't think, mustn't move. Lie quiet there, softly.

Damn that stone. Must nearly have been asleep. Such a start. Know when you're lying in bed and going down closer and closer into sleep; then suddenly with a start you leap up, all braced. Something shocked you awake. Something, but God knows what. That's how it was with me, hitting that stone. Come to think, all those in front most like kicked that stone same way as I did, and woke up with a start same way and all those behind are going to kick that stone too and wake up. Unless, of course, someone's going to kick that stone right out of the way, where just nobody can't kick it any more. That'd be an idea, if you was awake enough and you see everybody falling over that stone, rank after rank, as they go by swearing, just kick that stone right out of the way, and then they all go sleeping home. Damn, not home, that's not what I mean; all get to the objective, that's the place we're going to, 'cos we've got to go to it, 'cos they told us we'd got to go.

This damn blister and this damn pack; they hurt me feet and they hurt me back. Poetry, poetry; viewless wings. Fifteen hours in a dead man's vest, yo ho ho and wotta bum. Yes, laugh, pal, laugh. But his legs weren't shot away but crushed, see. An' it's no laugh stripping a man whose legs aren't shot away but just crushed; even if it's a fine vest. Now everything's rosy, rosy, 'cos I've lain in the blood at His feet.

So tired. So very tired. Fifteen hours, longer than fifteen hours now. Hell, it's a long time. Fifteen hours is

ON THE MARCH

a long time, let alone longer than that. And the nurses come and bend over you, and you're so tired you can't scarcely open your eyes, however pretty they are. An' the nurses say, you lay quiet now, holding your hand. Everythin' smells of clean. An' you lay quiet, 'cos that's how you want to be yourself. An' they say, everythin' 'll be all right, if you'll just lay quiet an' not move. An' you want just to lay quiet an' not move. An' everythin's all right. An' they say, you just turn over on your side and go sleep. An' your thighs are achin' and your back's. Me brain's dyin'. As you lay on yer side, yer brain's dyin' and the darkness begins swirlin',—and though you're laying there on the bed, you feel as if you was standin' up and fallin'. As if you was nothin' an' the bed under you was nothin', but you go round an' roun', more than sort of dizzy. Like I should say everythin' roun' was nothin' and you was a bit of somethin' swinging in it; like you was nothin', goin' to hit yer head but never hittin' yer head. Like I feel now. An' it all gets tighter 'n' tighter 'n' tighter; fallin'; 'n' then you—'n' then you—well, you ——

Ballard called. 'Man fainted.'

The sergeant said, 'Pull him on one side. Can't hold the column up.'

Ballard and the sergeant bent and pulled him off the track.

The sergeant said: 'The M.O.'s behind. Stand by and report to him when he comes up.' Then he ran up beside the column and took his place again.

Ballard nodded and loosened the man's collar and sat down by the side of the road to rest and wait.

Quinette's crime

JULIETTE EZZELIN remembered a street whose exact position she could not locate. When she reached the Avenue de Suffren station, it struck her that the street must be hidden somewhere about here, and she got out.

She generally had a good memory for places, which came to life as soon as she was on the spot, and enabled her to find her way with subconscious certainty.

She recognised the surroundings of the station well enough, but there was nothing that linked itself with the vision which had guided her: a greenish-coloured shop, in an out-of-the-way street, with tall grey houses with flat fronts; a shop with a few books, in various bindings, in the window.

It was there that her father had brought her one day when she was a child. A pleasant memory. She had thought of that greenish shop when the idea had struck her this morning to have the book bound which she was carrying under her arm.

After wandering round the various squares which presented themselves to her, awaiting some signal from her

¹ From *Men of Good Will* by Jules Romains. Translated from the French by Warre B. Wells. (Lovat Dickson, *Large Crown 8vo.*, 8s. 6d. net)

QUINETTE'S CRIME

memory, she ended by going into a stationer's shop and asking whether they knew a bookbinder's in the neighbourhood. There was one in a near-by street to which they directed her.

It was evidently neither the street nor the shop of her memory. But Juliette was too bewildered to persist in her search. Besides, it was memory that had led her at the beginning ; now it was chance. When a certain intoxication of despair possesses you, anything is preferable to making up your mind for yourself.

She went in. There was nobody to be seen. In the place where the counter stands in an ordinary shop was a long table, with a few books upon it and some strips of leather. When she had opened the door, a bell had rung.

A man appeared. He had the air of a gentleman, and, despite certain details of his clothes, looked much more like a local doctor or an architect than a tradesman. He wore a black beard, long and full, carefully trimmed. His forehead was high, with that definite, fine-skinned baldness which strikes you as distinguished and the mark of a student.

"What can I do for you, mademoiselle?"

His voice exactly suited his face. It was the voice of a man of good education, without a trace of suburban accent ; just a little business-like ; well modulated, but formal. He waited, without hurrying her, looking at Juliette with a polite smile. He had black eyes, deep-set and rather small.

Juliette untied the parcel she had carried under her arm. A piece of white paper ; a piece of silk paper ; a book in a yellow cover. The bookbinder noticed a wedding-ring on Juliette's finger. He looked at her suddenly with more attentive eyes. Her head was bent over her parcel.

"It's a book I value a great deal," she said.

QUINETTE'S CRIME

He read the title :

"*Selected Poems* by Paul Verlaine. Oh, so you are fond of poetry, madame?"

She did not reply. She was looking in the corner of the room, at a little table, with books taken apart, cut in pieces, which must have been reduced to this condition for binding. She spoke almost anxiously :

"It doesn't ever happen, in the course of work, that a book is damaged, spoilt - by accident?"

"Certainly not, madame. In any case, I am responsible——"

"I asked because - I value this copy so much. I wanted to be sure——"

"Have no fear, madame. What kind of binding would you like? Have you made up your mind?"

The bookbinder looked at her out of his deep-set, sharp eyes. Perhaps he realised the feeling of embarrassment which was taking possession of her. He turned his eyes away, and spoke with the most disinterested amiability.

"I can show you several types of binding, and some samples of leather. It would assist me if you would give me some idea of the price you wish to pay."

He lined up on the table half a dozen volumes, which he took out of a little, low bookcase.

"How much would this cost?"

"Something like this? Without any ornamentation? Isn't it a little severe for poetry? Certainly it's in very good taste. Wouldn't you like some tooling on the back - a flower like this, for example?"

Juliette looked at the little flower, finely tooled in blue and red strokes. It might have appealed to her : but Juliette was thinking of somebody, of somebody whose eyes - which she would never see again - were hard to please.

QUINETTE'S CRIME

What would he have said? Would he not have jeered at the little flower, especially on the back of this book? She hesitated to answer her own question. If she declined the little flower, she would be surer of not making a mistake.

"No. Quite plain."

"As you like, madame. I can do that for you for—I was going to say eighteen francs, but to do you a service I will make it fifteen. Inside, I shall preserve the cover and the back, of course. And I can give you a better paper than this."

Juliette almost blushed. She had no desire for any favours on the part of this gentleman with the pointed ears. (For she had just noticed that the tops of his ears were very flat, with a scarcely perceptible rim, broken to form a point).

"And are you in a great hurry for it?"

She did not know whether it was better to say yes or no; to come back as soon as possible or as late as possible.

He went on:

"I'm really spoiling you altogether. Of course, a pretty woman is always impatient. This is Tuesday—Tuesday, October 6th. Will you come back next Monday, in the evening? Your book will be ready for you. I don't know whether you realise that this is going to be an exceptional job"—he laughed—"or, rather, a terrible piece of favouritism. Look!"—he pointed to the dissected books on the little table—"Those volumes belong to a good customer of mine who has been waiting the last three months for them. . . . What name and address, if you please?"

Juliette felt uneasy again. For nothing in the world would she entrust her name and address to this man. Still, she was leaving the book with him. Might he not revenge

QUINETTE'S CRIME

himself by refusing to give it back? He could pretend not to recognise her. She stammered:

"I'll come and get it myself."

He smiled.

"Very well, madame. I shall not forget your face, you may be sure."

* * *

QUINETTE, alone again, placed the Verlaine on a shelf in the little bookcase and returned to his room behind the shop. He stroked his beard. He asked himself just what impression he had made upon the unknown young lady.

"Did she feel my flow of vitality? Yes, I think so."

Thereupon he devoted his attention to a whole part of his organism. He sought to discern the "pleasant, vivifying current" about which the prospectus spoke. It was true that he felt it but slightly; but feel it he did. It was as though magnetic passes enveloped the region of his pelvis, strayed over his back, his stomach. Quinette reflected that, as a matter of fact, he had never experienced magnetic passes, so that the comparison he was making lacked foundation.

What he felt resembled rather those confused impressions that come to life when you are cold and the heat of a fire begins to penetrate you, especially in that region of the back which is so chilly. He sought to draw other analogies. But he soon found that all comparisons with sensations already known to him erred in one way or another. On the other hand, the very phrase in the prospectus: "Dr. Sanden's electric Herculex diffuses through the weakened parts a pleasant, vivifying current of electricity," said exactly what it meant, and described with remarkable fidelity the

QUINETTE'S CRIME

subtle sense of well-being experienced by the wearer of the Herculex belt.

Not that the bookbinder was easy to gull. He had always been suspicious of charlatanism. It had required a certain idea, which became fixed little by little, after several months of incubation, to bring Quinette to try this experiment.

Chance had played its part in the adventure. Quinette had been living alone for the past four or five years; his wife had deserted him. As a result he had arrived fairly rapidly at a state of complete continence. The thing happened without his thinking about it. He had not had to control himself. It had not even occurred to him that there was anything in his manner of living worth thinking about.

But one day, in a parcel of books which a customer had left with him for binding, he came across a work dealing with *Sexual Anomalies*. He looked through it, as a matter of curiosity. He was not ignorant about those questions, but they did not occupy his mind.

Quinette was seized with anxiety. It was not the idea of anomaly in itself that disturbed him. He had never had any respect for the opinion of the majority or for their manner of life. He would have had no difficulty about accommodating himself to an anomaly which was flattering. But he felt clearly that this one was humiliating.

He spent some weeks, accordingly, in bringing himself to the conclusion that he was a kind of defective, hitherto unconscious of the fact, and that a state of tranquillity which he had accepted as quite normal was a blemish. He hesitated for some time about the category of abnormals in which he should classify himself. Was he impotent or merely frigid? He inclined towards the latter hypothesis.

At the same time he went over in his mind certain aspects of his conduct which had not struck him before.

QUINETTE'S CRIME

He realised his own indifference towards women, the meticulous but detached politeness which he showed towards them.

Happily, so the authorities quoted in the book declared, mere frigidity might be transient. It was due sometimes to being over-driven, to troubles, to having other things on one's mind.

Troubles Quinette had, arising out of the difficulties of his little business and the burden of a rent, already too heavy for him, which his landlord was threatening to increase. But he had, above all, a jealously absorbing passion : that of invention. What was worse, ill luck would have it that he devoted himself for choice to ideas of inventions on the largest scale, which would take a long time to realise, and out of which, no matter how well things went, he was sure he would never make any profit.

For example, he had studied for more than two years, and brought to perfection in its last detail, with all the slowness to which his initial lack of competence condemned him, a project for a railway with a single rail. This project, which suggested acrobatics at first sight, became on the contrary quite rational, and extremely ingenious, when one followed it in the detailed development which its author had given it, and took account of the special conditions of ground and use of which he intended it to apply. But what probability was there that pioneers in new countries would come and buy the plans of Quinette, bookbinder in the Grenelle district of Paris ?

His bookbinding suffered for it. Quinette filched as many hours from his trade as he could without going headlong to ruin. It was not surprising that his sexuality should suffer too.

To find out just where he stood on this latter point

QUINETTE'S CRIME

Quinette decided to make an experiment. He went to a house quite near him, in the boulevard de Grenelle, whose outside he had often noticed. But the interior decoration displeased him; and the preconceived idea of distrust about himself which he carried with him helped to paralyse him in his attempt. He returned from it persuaded that he must decidedly do something to improve his condition.

He did not dream of consulting doctors. What scared him away from them was less lack of faith in their methods than fear of giving away his secrets to anybody else. In this respect he was as suspicious as he could possibly be. Sometimes he carried his own letters to various distant post-offices, and had letters addressed to him under initials, *poste restante*, to avoid any possibility of tampering with them. In the street he sometimes turned round to see whether he was being followed.

He might have taken the risk of trying one of those specialities extolled by advertisements; but he was hostile to drugs which one introduced blindly into one's system. As he read his paper, he noticed repeatedly, on the back page, the advertisements of two brands of "electric belts," which were carrying on a clamorous, competitive publicity at the time: Dr. Sanden's Herculex and Dr. MacLaughlin's Electro-Vigour. He read the announcements closely.

To Quinette, member of the public and an educated man, they rang false. The very personalities of the two doctors seemed to belong to that chimerical kingdom of the popular pharmacopœia, in which there rubbed elbows village priests, gatherers of simples, the good Sisters, guardians of a secret against wetting your bed, and philanthropists bound by a vow which obliged them to insert an advertisement every morning, just as others have a Mass said every day.

QUINETTE'S CRIME

But in Quinette the inventor a different feeling awakened : that of confraternity. He could very well see himself, if his researches had turned in that direction, inventing an apparatus capable of diffusing in the lumbar region the effluvia of an artificial springtime. As for daring to laugh at the two doctors, he knew only too well how easily an invention of capital importance may wear to profane eyes an aspect of the ridiculous.

After these reflections, and others, he had finally decided to make a trial of Dr. Sanden's Herculex, which had the advantage of making much more specific promises so far as virility was concerned, whereas the Electro-Vigour, despite its name, confined itself to rather elusive generalities.

As a matter of fact, when he had bought the Herculex (at Sanden Electric Belts, 14 rue Taitbout), Quinette nearly yielded to the desire, natural in an inventor, to take it to pieces. What restrained him was the fear of finding a couple of Belgian sous and sawdust.

For three days now the bookbinder had been wearing his belt. He expected from it not so much the possibility of accomplishing amorous exploits, for which he continued to have little inclination, as the disappearance of a sense of inferiority. Together with all the best authorities, he believed that virile vigour was bound up with vitality in general. He refused to admit that his own vitality was diminished. Perhaps it was not even asleep, but had merely let itself be turned too exclusively towards brain-work. Even at best the Herculex could certainly not be capable of making energy burst forth in an organism which was fundamentally defective ; but it might, by conveying energy to certain organs, make it more manifest than it had been before, and suppress a doubt in the wearer which could not fail to become depressing.

QUINETTE'S CRIME

Quinette attached, therefore, a real importance to the impression which he had just made on the young lady. The kind of embarrassment, and even of fright, which had visibly taken possession of her was only to be explained by a radiation of unusual energy emanating from Quinette. Without descending to the silliness of the spiritualists, it was not unreasonable to suppose that the vital energy of a person did radiate, and, when it had an increase of liveliness, became felt by other people, to the point of becoming almost unbearable.

For that matter, Quinette was fully conscious of the sensation which had suddenly uplifted him. Only one point intrigued him: whether this sensation had taken possession of him at the very moment when he noticed a wedding-ring on his visitor's finger.

When she left the shop, Juliette continued to follow the street in the direction opposite to that of the station. She discovered, at the end of it, houses that were small and poor, but brightened by the sun; a whole neighbourhood which she did not know, and through which she made her way in no hurry, looking for a bus.

Her visit to the bookbinder's had rid her of the intoxication of melancholy in which she had been living since the morning. The very uneasiness which she had just felt, her distress at the idea that she would have to go back, had given her a beginning of interest in something else than her own despair.

Perhaps fifty paces farther on, as she glanced up a kind of long passage between two low houses, which ended in an opening, she noticed, against the house on the left, a man, with his head turned a little towards the street, and his shoulders and thighs glued to the wall, as though he were trying to drive himself into the wall, to efface himself in it.

QUINETTE'S CRIME

She did not dare to stop for a better view of him. She had not been able to distinguish his face or his clothes. He seemed to her to have his hands behind his back. She went on.

Three minutes later Quinette, in the room at the back of his shop, was taking off his Herculex belt, in order to change its position slightly and get rid of a little rubbing of the skin which annoyed him, when he heard the door of the shop open, and then close with such a slam that the bell had scarcely time to ring.

"Who's this idiot coming in like that? He'll break my windows." And Quinette hastened to put his clothes in order. He had a horror of broken windows, as he had of noisy, clumsy people. He put on a severe look.

When he opened the door, he saw in the middle of the shop a man turned towards him, whose face was badly lighted, but whose attitude betrayed his extreme agitation.

"Monsieur," said the man, "I beg your pardon, but you probably have a—kitchen tap, a little basin. I want to wash, as a matter of fact——"

Quinette was no coward, at least in circumstances like this. (He was sometimes afraid of a spider or of a reptile, and he was sometimes scared at night, on his pitch-black staircase.) He was not even easily upset. He kept all his presence of mind as he inspected the man, who was startling enough, and tried to take in the situation.

"Wash? What do you mean—wash?"

"I've dirtied myself. I want to clean up a little."

The man had his hands tightly clenched. They could scarcely be seen at all. As to his clothes, they did not seem soiled. He was wearing a faded bowler hat.

There was nothing in the least menacing about his appearance; he was, on the contrary, beseeching, and apparently

QUINETTE'S CRIME

unarmed. Quinette made a quarter-circle around him to see him better.

"You would be doing me a very great service," said the other.

His voice trembled with distress.

"This fellow," Quinette thought, "has been doing something he shouldn't." He went over to the street door and put his hand on the latch.

"Monsieur, monsieur!" implored the man.

"What?"

"What are you going to do?"

"Nothing. I'm just looking out."

He glanced up and down the street, without opening the door. He wanted to see whether the man was being pursued; whether there was any excitement in the street, people running or searching, the nucleus of a crowd. There was nothing, at least in the immediate neighbourhood. At the windows of the house opposite, there was no sign of curiosity either.

Quinette came back, stroking his fine business-man's beard. The man did not inspire any kind of pity in him. If he had seen police looking for the fugitive in the street, he would have opened the door and called them. But he had an intense desire to know more about this and to hold a man's secret in his hands. Such an adventure had never happened to him before. It was a long time since he had felt such a zest in living.

He went and opened the door at the back of the shop.

"Come in here."

He let the man pass in front of him.

"A little farther on. There you are. Open the door."

The man hesitated a moment; then, with the tips of his fingers, as though there were something wrong with his

QUINETTE'S CRIME

hand, he opened this second door and entered a narrow kitchen. Quinette followed him. The handle of the door was of white porcelain. Quinette noticed on it, on both sides, two little red smears, which were certainly blood.

"There's the sink. There's soap there, and towels to your left."

The man waited, throwing a supplicating glance at Quinette. The bookbinder smiled.

"Well, am I in your way?"

The other was still distressed; his hands were still clenched. The light was better than in the shop, and on the material of his coat and trousers were to be seen some brown stains.

"Come on," Quinette resumed, with a hint of derision in his courteous voice, "you must surely understand that I am a man of discretion. Wash yourself in peace. You need it."

And he remained planted at the entrance to the kitchen.

The man made up his mind to turn on the water and seize the soap. There were fearful little movements about all his actions. One would have said that every object he touched was burning.

He washed his hands, and rinsed them several times.

"Don't leave any blood in my sink," said Quinette, in the same tone of voice.

The man glanced at him in an imploring kind of way; then, seeing a scrubbing-brush, he started soaping the stone of the sink, like a good servant, and pushing the suds carefully towards the drain-pipe. When he had finished, he appeared to be hesitating again.

"Aren't you going on?"

"Couldn't you leave me alone for a moment?" the man begged.

QUINETTE'S CRIME

"If I leave him alone, he'll take himself off," thought Quinette. The kitchen opened on a little courtyard.

"Why? Because you want to wash the stains off your clothes too?" He laughed his little dry laugh. "You make me laugh. It's too late for you to take precautions like that with me. . . . I promise you I won't look. Go on. I promise."

The other did not quite know how to get rid of the stains. He pulled out his handkerchief; but he put it back immediately. The handkerchief was already stained with blood.

"Do you want something? A clean rag? But what should I do with it afterwards? . . . Yes, you might keep it and throw it down the first sewer you come to—with your handkerchief, eh?" He smiled. "You mustn't forget your handkerchief."

He took a piece of white cloth off the kitchen rack and handed it to the man, who rolled it into a mop, damped it, soaped it, and started rubbing the stains on his clothes one after the other. When the mop was dirty, he rinsed it in plenty of water.

Quinette, who had at first turned his eyes away, did not keep his promise long. But his curiosity had become calmer. He seemed to be following an interesting, but ordinary, operation. So much so that his presence, instead of weighing upon the other, helped him to recover his equilibrium.

After a few minutes' silence Quinette said in a low, friendly voice, in which there was no longer any mockery: "Now tell me something about what happened."

The man jumped, and let his mop fall into the sink. Terror streamed from his eyes, his whole face broke into a sweat of panic. His skin turned the colour of dust.

QUINETTE'S CRIME

Quinette outdid himself in gentleness and unction.

"I'm not asking you to annoy you. . . . Not at all, not at all. . . . In any case, it's a question of your telling me, or the evening paper . . . more or less . . ."

The idea of a report in the paper seemed to stab the other painfully enough to make him wince.

"What are you stopping for?"

The man obediently took up his mop and went on with his cleaning.

Quinette continued, in a still lower tone :

"You don't want to talk about it yet. That's quite understandable. Well, tell me, then, what are you going to do? When you leave here, where are you going?"

"I don't know!"

"What, you don't know?"

"No."

"Not the least idea?"

"No." (The "No" was more uncertain.)

"Are you going to hide somewhere?"

The other was silent. Quinette reflected. Then he said :

"Listen. I'm interested in you. I don't want to torment you now. But I want to see you again."

He said : "I want to see you again" with such an air of calm determination that the other let his rag drop out of his hands again. Quinette pressed his advantage.

"This very day. Anywhere you like."

The other's face assumed an expression of stupefied acquiescence ; then he stammered :

"Yes . . . but I don't know where."

"I don't ask you to make it the place where you hide yourself. Not at all. Somewhere near, if you like—or farther away. It's all the same to me."

QUINETTE'S CRIME

"I don't know . . . I really can't say . . ."

Quinette's tone was harsher.

"But you can. You must know a quiet little café. . . . After five o'clock, so that it will be dark. Let's say six o'clock. Come, now!"

The man looked around him wildly, seeking some way of escape.

"You had better realise," the bookbinder warned him, "that there can be no question for a moment of your playing a trick on me. You may say to yourself that once you get out of here . . . Yes. . . . But suppose that this evening you don't turn up at the meeting-place, eh? And suppose I insist on finding you again? I have an idea that I could provide a description of you which would not be far wrong, and some other details into the bargain."

The man suddenly looked fierce.

"Don't you look at me like that," said Quinette, "unless you want me to call for help. . . . I have neighbours on both sides."

The other relapsed into his distressed humility. He asked, in a very low voice :

"Do you belong to the police?"

"I? What an idea! I'm a bookbinder. I bind books. You might have seen them in my shop. . . Police, indeed!"

"This meeting you're talking about—it's not to have me nabbed?"

"What's to prevent me from doing that now?"

"You're alone. You might be afraid."

"Oh, the police are bound to have ways of making sure of a clumsy fellow who falls into their hands. No: that's not my business. Don't be afraid."

"Then why do you want to see me again?"

"Because you interest me, and I want to have a quiet

QUINETTE'S CRIME

talk with you. It's impossible, just now, isn't it? You're too much upset. Besides, I don't want you to stay here for ever. Have you thought about the risk I'm running? Eh? You owe me a certain amount of gratitude."

The other reflected; then, still in a low voice, he asked: "Wouldn't you rather have money instead?"

"No, thanks. It's nice of you to suggest it; but no; I'm quite disinterested in this business. That's something that surprises you, isn't it? I'll even say this—I ask nothing but to do you another service. On condition that I don't get myself into trouble, of course."

His voice hardened.

"Come on, hurry up and tell me where you will be at six o'clock!"

The man replied, after a pause:

"You know the rue Saint-Antoine?"

"The street? Not the faubourg?"

"No, the street."

"Yes, of course. Well?"

"You know the pavement on the left-hand side, going towards the Bastille, between—let's say between the rue Malher and the rue de Turenne?"

"Wait a minute—I don't know the neighbourhood as well as all that. . . . Wait a minute. Yes, I know where you mean, more or less."

"It's opposite Saint Paul's Church."

"Yes. I've got it. Anyway, once I have the names of the streets, I can find it. Well?"

"Well, will you be on that pavement from—ten to six, say?"

"Yes."

"Between one street and the other. Walk up and down, if necessary—as though you were out for a stroll."

QUINETTE'S CRIME

"Yes."

"About that time, I'll arrange for you to see me. You will only have to follow me."

"Where to?"

"I don't know. A café; or somewhere else. I'll see."

"But are you sure of seeing me, in the crowd?"

"Sooner or later, yes."

"You know it will be dark by that time?"

"I know. But there are plenty of shops. It will be light enough."

"Very well. You say the pavement on the left-hand side between ——?"

"—the rue Malher and the rue de Turenne. . . . You have only to remember that it is opposite the church."

"All right."

The man breathed a sigh of resignation. Then he showed a desire to be gone.

"Listen," said Quinette; "I don't think that anybody saw you coming in. But there's no harm in being on the safe side. I'm going to make you up a fair-sized package, in which I'll put something or other. . . . Try to look like a man running errands. Besides—one never knows—in case you should be questioned on the way . . ."

He pulled him into the shop and went on, as he searched about him:

"It might help you to avert suspicion . . . Yes, but I was going to put in some old pieces of cardboard. . . . That won't do. . . . If you should have to open the package, it must look like the real thing. I'm going to make you up a real parcel of old books, damaged books that I have lying about at the back of bookcases. You see what confidence I have in you—because they're worth something

QUINETTE'S CRIME

after all. I never thought of that. You will bring them back to me this evening."

"Not likely!"

"Are you afraid of their being a nuisance?"

He got together the volumes and made a neat package out of them.

"And what if they are a bit of a nuisance? Bear in mind that a man carrying a parcel like that has the air of somebody out on business. . . . He doesn't attract attention; on the contrary. It's better for me, too. If I am seen with you this evening, I can pretend afterwards that, though I didn't know you, I had bought some second-hand books from you, which you had picked up in the second-hand shops or at the bookstalls; and that I intend to bind them and then sell them to customers, or to book-shops. All you have to do is not give me away."

The parcel was wrapped up in fine green wrapping-paper and tied.

"Put that under your arm."

The man took the parcel and started towards the door. He was on the point of extending his free hand to the bookbinder, but thought better of it.

"This evening without fail, then," Quinette said to him, insistently. "Bring the parcel. In the first place, it will help me to recognise you. Besides, it's better from every point of view. . . . Walk out boldly!"

When the bookbinder had shut the door again, and found himself alone, he had the feeling that his life hitherto had not meant much. It had been nothing but commonplace and boredom. Even his inventions struck him as uninteresting. His railway with a single rail? Something like the amusement of a prisoner in his cell. There were decidedly better employments for inventive genius, for

QUINETTE'S CRIME

constructive dreaming. He was only catching a glimpse of them so far, but along a vista rich in dazzling promise.

He went back to the kitchen. Its door was still open. The smears of blood still marked the white porcelain handle.

In the kitchen the first thing he saw, lying on a corner of the table, was the mop which the man had used to clean his clothes. The stuff had turned a dirty grey, slightly reddish, in which there was much more dirt and soap than blood.

With some firewood, newspaper, and chips, Quinette lit a fire in the kitchen stove. When it was burning brightly, he unfolded the rag and threw it in. It burnt slowly and with difficulty, emitting a hiss of steam.

What trace might still remain? He looked at the surface of the furniture and of the floor, sideways, to see whether there were any suspicious reflections. He estimated the infinitesimal quantity of blood which all these washings and rinsings were likely to have left in a hole in the stone of the sink or in the bristles of the brush. He built up the fire again to burn a rag he had used.

There remained the two smears of blood on the handle of the door. Quinette had left them alone so far. Against the white of the porcelain they made a kind of fascinating, pathetic design. The bookbinder took a clean cloth to wipe them off. Suddenly he changed his mind. He went up to his bedroom, on the first floor, and got a piece of cotton-wool. Then, as the blood had dried and stuck to the porcelain, he moistened the cotton-wool slightly before rubbing it. Next he folded the cotton-wool up so that the tissue which had absorbed the blood was enclosed within it. Finally he stuck it inside an empty match-box, which he proceeded to put at the very back of his cash-drawer.

(To be continued)

Our Contributors

MR. HERMON GILL, an Englishman lives in Australia where his name as a writer is well known. He is a regular contributor to the *Melbourne Herald* and other Australian papers.

MR. LOUIS GOLDING, born in Manchester in 1895, began his career as a novelist at the age of seven with a work entitled *The Adventures of Thres on Bloody Island*. He was educated at Manchester Grammar School and at Oxford, where he was a contemporary of Mr. L. A. G. Strong and editor of *The New Oxford*. *Magnolia Street*, his most popular novel, was begun ten years before it was published in 1932.

MR. RAYMOND OTIS is a young American writer, who, with his wife, is living in Santa Fé, Mexico. His first novel, *Fire Brigade*, is to be published shortly.

While he was a master at a preparatory school near Oxford, MR. L. A. G. STRONG published some verses and short stories. His first novel, *Dewar Rides*, put him at once among the foremost of the younger novelists. He has since followed its success up with *The Jealous Ghost*, *The Garden*, *The Brothers* and *Sea Wall* which has just been published.

On the publication of *His Monkey Wife*, MR. JOHN COLLIER made an immediate mark. Though he has published very few books, they all bear the stamp of originality. His wit and fantastic humour is apparent in everything he writes. Connoisseurs of the short story maintain that his story *Green Thoughts* is one of the most remarkable in the language. His last novel is *Tom's A-Cold*.

MR. CLIFFORD BAX is best known as a dramatist : his plays, *The Rose Without a Thorn*, *Socrates*, and *The Venetian* earning him especially a reputation for distinctive dialogue and wit. His books include *Pretty Witty Nell*, a life of Nell Gwynn, and *That Immortal Sea*, a study of Religion and Sex. His volume of collected poems which came out last year under the title of *Farewell My Muse* won wide critical praise.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

FRITIOF NILSSON's book, *Bombi Bitt*, which is shortly to be published in English and of which our story *The Fishing Party* will form a part, is said by his Swedish friends to be a series of reminiscences of his own boyhood. Running away from home at the age of fourteen, he spent two years before the mast, and his life since has been a series of adventures. He has found time, however, to become one of Sweden's most successful short story writers.

MR. ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL, the youngest of our contributors, came down from Oxford three years ago. While an undergraduate he edited the *Oxford Outlook*. He has published a number of short stories and two novels. Of his last, *About Levy*, Mr. Harold Nicolson wrote: "I should be surprised if within ten years he did not stand in the very forefront of contemporary fiction." Mr. Calder-Marshall has been a schoolmaster, and is a keen mountaineer.

As a poet, a novelist and a dramatist JULES ROMAINS has built up the reputation of being one of the most brilliant creative writers in France. He was born forty-eight years ago in the mountains of Velay, but Paris has always had a fascination for him. His books *Mort du Quelqu'un*, the *Vie Unanime* and *Les Copains* have a European reputation. But *Men of Goodwill*, from which our serial story is taken, is easily his most ambitious and most successful work. *Men of Goodwill* is a long book and several more volumes have still to be published both in the French and English editions. The necessarily short extracts we hope to publish in this magazine will give some idea of the authors wealth of imagination and powers of psychological insight.